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‘As Lated Tongues Bespoke’: Popular Protest in South-East England, 1790-1840

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Abstract

Hobsbawm and Rudé's *Captain Swing*, their now-classic study of the so-called 'Swing Riots' of 1830, has, since its publication in 1969, assumed a pivotal role in the development of both 'Protest Studies' and 'Rural History'. Whilst numerous scholars, within the academy and beyond, have attempted to revise aspects of Hobsbawm and Rudé's account, no attempt has been made to *systematically* readdress Swing in its initial south-eastern theatre. This thesis offers such a revaluation, but also attempts to locate south-eastern Swing within the context of prior protest histories from the 1790s (a decade that shaped the use of protest for the next 30 years) and the way in which its failure to improve labourers' living standards impacted upon the future resort to protest. In so doing Swing is shown to have been far more intense, and far less tentative, not least in the Kentish communities within which it started in the late summer of 1830. It's initial participants were both highly organised and strongly motivated by an empowering plebeian culture, also receiving support from smaller farmers and artisans who were equally disadvantaged by agrarian capitalism's totemic symbol: the threshing machine. As Swing spread beyond East Kent, something partly attributable to a unique series of events which tied the hands of the local authorities in its initial theatres, it was increasingly high-jacked by both political radicals, seizing the opportunity to attempt a continental style revolution, and farmers who used the power of mobile crowds to, often successfully, attempt rent, tax and tithe reductions. Moreover, whilst Swing utilised tried and tested tactics, not least overt demonstrations which this thesis shows persisted throughout the early nineteenth-century despite the brutal repression of the 1795-6 wave of food riots, it did so in new ways, often using customary culture to legitimise their moral protests.

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Chapter 1: Rough Men and Pleasant Histories

I

Somewhat inevitably the dawn of the new millennium was heralded not with futuristic celebrations and visions, but with a tangible rise in nostalgia. Despite government attempts to stamp the celebrations with an undeniably 'modern' touch, whatever they felt that meant, many local communities did not tow the line. In towns and villages throughout Britain there was a tangible sense of *fin de siècle* in the new millennial histories that were written, histories usually offering a rosy past in contrast to an uncertain and rowdy present, let alone future. Not only were histories constructed in the form of glossy parochial prints, other constructions were attempted too. In Canterbury a Conservative councillor suggested, without a hint of irony, the best way to mark the year 2000 was to *reconstruct* the city walls.

More conventional were the attempts to render the past digestible by reducing local, or even national, histories into small revue sized chunks. One such production was staged at Petham, a small village just outside of Canterbury. The cast and crew, a 'talented bunch' of 'a few professionals and many local amateurs', so said the *Kentish Gazette* arts reporter, set to music, in true vaudevillian style, the story of 'life in the district from about 90AD to the present day'. The ethos behind their production was that it should be 'a celebration of the past as well as the present' grounded within the philosophy that 'the past and present are part of the same story...the past is not worse than the present, but just different'. Interestingly the reporter singled out one particular scene for lavish praise; the stage was dominated by a mock-up threshing machine which was subsequently destroyed in a startling recreation of the 'Luddite riots', marked even more dramatic by the 'lively orchestration [which] was truly complimentary'. Indeed the talismanic 'fact' that the riots started in the neighbouring parish of Lower Hardres is almost a matter of local pride.¹

The inclusion of a scene focusing on the so-called 'Swing Riots', a dramatic and unique episode in both English rural history and local history, is a fascinating insight into popular conceptions of historical popular protest. In the same way that the exhibits of a museum dedicated to 'the age of steam' inspires a form of nostalgia that rewrites the past as an easy to consume entertainment brand, the Petham show betrays a sense that a fascination with this dramatic episode inspires an odd form of bucolic wistfulness. By transforming what were events set within a sophisticated sense of community justice, judicial law and a

¹ *Kentish Gazette*, 6 July 2000.

strong, empowering plebeian political culture into crude reactionary measures by simple country folk, we are able to look back with both a fondness and admiration for their quaint tenacity - of course the machines would win! - whilst wallowing in the smug glory of our superior strategies of living - how far we've come! Popular conceptions and consumptions of the past thrive on these dialectics, they are teleological and Whiggish, fun and self-sustaining, yet inspire little more than a second of melancholy. As Adrian Randall notes of the few linguistic legacies that History has thus far bequeathed the English language, 'Luddite' and its noun 'Luddism' are rare exemplars. The sense of conspiracy is heightened yet further by the delicious irony the spellchecker on my computer - the 21st century's most common target of Luddite remarks – recognises neither.²

Maybe the fascination derives from a universal sympathy with those faced by the all-powerful onward march of the machine. Everyone is familiar with the scenario where a task is mechanised for the first time, or more commonly is mechanised yet further. The growth in access to the Internet and the, again, apparently inevitable rise in the use of on-line services has been given as the excuse by banks as to why they've had to reduce their branch network and dramatically lower their staffing. Booksellers, insurance companies and recorded music retailers amongst others have all made similar claims. Beyond the fleeting indignation of newspaper headlines there was supposed to be no sustained public resistance. The moral lesson from the 'defeat' of the Luddites, indeed the eleventh commandment for the machinic age, so claims Randall, was supposed to be that 'resistance was dangerous, resistance was foolish, resistance was useless'. But change is rarely smooth and painless, rather fickle capital shatters the social world into infinitely mutable class relations, thereby spawning social tensions that inevitably provoke a thousand little struggles. The recent spate of 'anti-globalisation' riots/rallies, starting at the World Trade Talks at Seattle in 1999, in this sense are only the latest attempts to resist the stretched arm of capital.

Another important element in the enduring public fascination with the 'Swing Riots' is the fact that the very word 'riot' is immensely provocative; riots, in 1830 as much as today, provide lively copy. Mass outbreaks of protest, such as Swing, generate rich seams of primary and secondary documentation which, when mined, make feasible, and add the sheen of authenticity to, authoritative reconstructions. Within twelve months Swing was already the subject of, at least, five pamphlets, published either with the purpose of moral education, condemning the backward ways of the rural labourer, or political satire. The titles are revealing: *The history of Swing, the noted Kent Rick Burner (Written by himself)*, *A short Account of the life and death of Swing, the Rick-Burner; written by one well*

² A. Randall, *Before the Luddites: Custom, community and machinery in the English woollen*

acquainted with him and *Swing Unmasked; or, the causes of rural incendiarism*. All purported to be real accounts of an intriguing, though actually fictitious, figure who, through newspaper reports, had entered the popular imagination. *Swing: or, Who are the Incendiaries? A tragedy [in five acts, in prose and verse]* and “*Swing!*” *A farce, in one act*’ both relied on a much older tradition of re-creating major news events as popular theatre or quasi-fictitious works, thus reinforcing the myth of Swing and his riots.³

Despite the preoccupation of these publications with incendiarism, the most visible face of Swing, popular conceptions now rest firmly on the idea that the movement was solely concerned with the iniquities of the machine. *Captain Swing*, Hobsbawm and Rudé’s classic study of the movement, attempted to log the number of different disturbances throughout the country. Their figures, although now shown to underestimate the actual level of reported disturbances, support this popular conception: 390 threshing machines were broken, with 26 cases of destruction of other agricultural machinery; however they also logged 316 cases of arson. In Swing’s initial theatre of the south-east arson was by far the most common and visible form of the disturbances.⁴

Swing is not the only dramatic event in the English countryside of the early nineteenth-century to have reached deep into the popular historical consciousness. The abortive attempt at unionism by agricultural labourers at Tolpuddle in Dorset, although quite different in scale to Swing, has also received a level of attention that has moved it beyond ‘historians’, within the academy and beyond, and into the popular imagination. The harsh repression of Tolpuddle by the local and national authorities, as with Swing, was never forgotten but the efforts of early twentieth-century historians, not least through the rash of union-sponsored publications around the 1933 centenary, were central in (re-)

industry, 1776-1809 (Cambridge, 1991), see pp.1-11.

³ C.Z. Barnett, “*Swing!*” *A farce, in one act* (London, 1830). ‘Francis Swing’ (pseud.), *The history of Swing, the noted Kent Rick Burner. Written by himself* (London, 1830). S-E.G.W. (?), *A short Account of the life and death of Swing, the Rick-Burner; written by one well acquainted with him* (London, 1831), includes the supposed ‘confession’ of Thomas Goodman, now under sentence of death, in Horsham jail, for rick-burning. R. Taylor, *Swing: or, Who are the Incendiaries? A tragedy [in five acts, in prose and in verse]* (London, 1831). E. Wakefield, *Swing Unmasked; or, the causes of rural incendiarism* (London, 1831). See also Anon. (‘Swing’), *A letter from Swing to the people of England* (Lichfield, 1830), apparently ‘an exhortation to agricultural arsonists to mend their ways by the author who is ‘not the real original Swing the burner of ricks’.

⁴ E. Hobsbawm and G. Rudé, *Captain Swing* (London, 1969), pp.304-5. C. Griffin, ‘There was no law to punish that offence’ Re-assessing *Captain Swing*: Rural Luddism and Rebellion in East Kent, 1830-31’, *Southern History*, 22 (2000); R. Wells, ‘Social Protest, Class, Conflict and Consciousness, in the English Countryside 1700-1880’, in M. Reed and R. Wells (eds.), *Class, Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside 1700-1880* (London, 1990); *Idem.*, ‘Mr William Cobbett, Captain Swing, and King William IV’, *Agricultural History Review*, 45, 1 (1997).

establishing Tolpuddle in the national consciousness.⁵ It is not only posterity, as EP Thompson famously claimed, that places an 'enormous condescension' onto the heads of lost peoples but also the processes of mythologization used to construct consumable histories within new communities.⁶

Beyond the demand for good stories - and after all, according to the *Independent*, we're all history students now, seduced by the TV narratives of Simon Schama and David Starkey - Swing and Tolpuddle were, and are, hugely important historical landmarks, and just as an understanding of Tolpuddle is universally accepted to be crucial to our understanding of the development of rural unionism, Swing is central to our understanding of the use of popular protest forms both before and after the rising. This centrality is even more striking considering that *Captain Swing* marked an important turning point of our understanding of rural protest. Hobsbawm and Rudé's treatment of Swing sought to locate the outbreak of disturbance within the context of the rural proletariat's self-determination and the cultures and communities in which they lived and worked, indeed their work should be viewed as the first sustained application of EP Thompson's agenda for the study of the English working class to the English countryside.⁷ Along with Thompson, Hobsbawm and Rudé were especially sensitive to the variety and sophistication of the responses of the proletariat to both dramatic change and social oppression. The tables in *Captain Swing* listed not only machine breaking and arson as tactics deployed during Swing but also the sending of threatening letters; wage, tithe, enclosure, food, rent and workhouse riots; strikes; political demonstrations; assaults; demanding money be menaces; and even burglary. Hobsbawm and Rudé noted that in the 35 years prior to Swing the rural poor had openly protested against enclosure, dearth and high food prices, but that the 'war-years diminished such movements' with forms of rural terror, especially incendiarism and cattle-maiming, infringements on the game laws, as well as machine breaking becoming increasingly the way in which the rural poor protested. However, forms of rural terror were, before 1830, 'exceptional and not a normal part of rural agitation'.⁸

II: Dramatic Outbreaks and Everyday Struggles

⁵ See: W. MacLennan, *The Martyrs of Tolpuddle* (London, 1934); M. Firth and M. Hopkinson, *The Tolpuddle Martyrs* (London, 1934); G.A. Hutt, *Class against Class, 1834-1934* (London, 1934); W. Citrine, *The Book of the Martyrs of Tolpuddle, 1834-1934* (London, 1934).

⁶ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working-Class* (London, 1968), p.13.

⁷ Thompson's masterpiece was essentially about the urban working class. The one chapter on 'The Field Labourers' took 26 of the 931 pages of text of the 1968 edition: *Ibid.*, chapter 7, pp.233-258.

⁸ Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, pp.304-5, 80 and chapters 4 and 5.

Captain Swing was both a product of its time, betraying the influence of 1960's Marxist social history, of which its authors were both key propagandists, and also had an obvious debt to the pioneering early twentieth-century work of the Hammonds, the first historians to systematically appraise Swing. Considerations of more everyday rural struggles though are only relatively recent phenomena, written by the radical 'grandchildren' of the Hammonds. The pregnant possibilities showcased by Hobsbawm, Rudé and Thompson in the 1960's were eagerly appropriated by the burgeoning post-*Captain Swing* protest literature. These more recent studies, dating back to c.1975 with the important publication of *Albion's Fatal Tree* and the influential study by David Jones of 1840's East Anglian incendiarism, have reinforced Hobsbawm and Rudé's conclusion that Swing was both exceptional *and* part of a broader and sustained attempt by the rural poor to improve their lot, or at least not let it deteriorate further, but have taken issue with their analysis of pre-Swing protest.⁹

The so-called Wells-Charlesworth debate, on the changing nature of protest in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century England, achieved little consensus but for the need for broader studies of the 'everyday lives' of the rural proletariat.¹⁰ To an extent these calls have been heeded, the last decade or so has seen the publication of groundbreaking works by amongst others John Archer, Barry Reay, Andrew Charlesworth, Jeanette Neeson, Adrian Randall and Roger Wells that have moved beyond the exclusive study of the dramatic to the study of the comparatively mundane:¹¹ indeed, as David Eastwood notes,

⁹ *Ibid.*; J.L. and B. Hammond, *The Village Labourer* (London, 1978, first published in 1911); D. Hay *et al* (eds.), *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1976); David Jones, Thomas Campbell Foster and the Rural Labourer: Incendiarism in East Anglia in the 1840s, *Social History*, 1 (1976).

¹⁰ The debate started with a paper by Wells ('The Development of the English Rural Proletariat and Social Protest, 1700-1850', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 6, 2 (1979)) prompting a reply by Charlesworth ('The Development of the English Rural Proletariat and Social Protest, 1700-1850: A Comment', *Ibid.*, 8, 1 (1980)) which in itself prompted a reply by Wells ('Social Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside in the Early Nineteenth Century: A Rejoinder', *Ibid.*, 8, 4 (1981)). Thereafter further responses were made by J. Archer ('The Wells-Charlesworth Debate: A Personal Comment on Arson in Norfolk and Suffolk', *Ibid.*, 9, 4 (1982)), D. Mills and B. Short ('Social Change and Social Conflict in Nineteenth-Century England: The Use of the Open-Closed Village Model', *Ibid.*, 10, 4 (1983)), M. Reed ('Social Change and Social Conflict in Nineteenth-Century England: A Comment', *Ibid.*, 12, 1 (1984)); and finally D. Mills, again (Peasants and Conflict in Nineteenth-Century England: A Comment on Two Recent Articles', *Ibid.*, 15, 3 (1988)). These essays were collected together in an edited volume with some further reflections by the editors: see Reed and Wells (eds.) *Class, Conflict and Protest*.

¹¹ Most notably, J. Archer, *By a Flash and a Scare: Arson, Animal Maiming, and Poaching in East Anglia 1815-1870* (Oxford, 1990); B. Reay, *The Last Rising of the Agricultural Labourers: Rural Life and Protest in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1990); *Idem.*, *Microhistories: Demography, Society, and Culture in Rural England, 1800-1930* (Cambridge, 1996); A. Randall and A. Charlesworth (eds.), *Markets, Market Culture and Popular Protest in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Liverpool, 1996); *Idem.* (eds.), *Moral Economy and Popular Protest: Crowds, Conflict and Authority* (London, 2000); J. Neeson, *Commoners, Common Right, Enclosure and Social Change in England 1700-1820* (Cambridge, 1993); A. Randall, *Before the Luddites*; R. Wells, *Wretched Faces: Famine in Wartime England 1763-1803* (Gloucester, 1988); Reed and Wells, *Class, Conflict and*

the post-*Captain Swing* 'literature on rural protest in nineteenth-century England has grown in both range and sophistication'.¹² Despite this vigour, John Stevenson's widely cited 'textbook' on 'popular disturbances' in England between 1700 and 1832 still makes only the most token reference to what he disparagingly labels events that were not acts of 'explicit protest'.¹³ Moreover, the developments in British historiography have been mirrored by changes in anthropologically based studies of current peasant resistance, especially in South-east Asia. As James Scott has observed, the circumstances that allow full-scale peasant rebellions are rare, and when they do occur they are nearly always crushed. To better understand, he continued, how social change, not least as manifested through the intensification and capitalization of agriculture, is experienced, what is needed is a greater emphasis on those forms of resistance which are 'everyday'.¹⁴ Such an understanding is crucial as individual acts of protest within dramatic outbreaks rely on existing cultural vocabularies of protest: that is to say, that even within more widespread outbreaks everyday 'weapons of the weak' were, and are, deployed.

Archives have been raided to find demonstrations, riots, attempted unionism, politicking, and whatever else looked like insurrection to prove the being of either a primitive, essentially pre-modern, society, a dynamic 'modern' society (whatever that may mean), or even the moment at which Modernity, or at least *a* modernity, became apparent. As John Archer has correctly noted, in this search 'the weight of historical scholarship has rested firmly on those dramatic collective incidents which occasionally shook what many suppose to be an otherwise undisturbed society'.¹⁵ But to better understand *Swing*, and other similar rural uprisings (the 'dramatic'), we need to better understand the rural poor's vocabulary of resistance, and to so do we need to lean yet harder upon the archive. This understanding is made even more important in light of considerations of individual *Swing* incidents. Many of the 'protest' forms deployed by *Swing*'s multifarious activists disavowed the attainment of public and symbolic goals instead, influenced and emboldened by the urgency and confidence of the surrounding overt actions, they sought to right personal wrongs. When on 9 November 1830 Elizabeth Studdam, a young single-woman, fired a hay stack in the grounds of the poor house at Birchington in the Isle of Thanet, this was her revenge for her treatment at the hands of the parish poor law officials. Whilst her actions, like so many others who started incendiary fires during *Swing*, had no discernible

Protest; J. Rule and R. Wells, *Crime, Protest and Popular Politics in Southern England 1740–1850* (London, 1997).

¹² D. Eastwood, 'Communities, Protest and Police in early Nineteenth-Century Oxfordshire: The Enclosure of Otmoor Reconsidered', *Agricultural History Review*, 44, 1 (1996), p.35.

¹³ J. Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances in England, 1700-1832* (London, 1992), pp.1-3.

¹⁴ J. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale, 1985), p.29.

connection to the wider gangs involved in breaking threshing machines and parish risings, they were probably still toasted in public houses and beershops throughout East Kent. For what has been classically styled as an overt outbreak Swing was often covert and in many locales, the incidents had more to do with 'everyday' forms of rural resistance than any insurrectionary 'movement'.¹⁶

The atmosphere engendered by Swing undoubtedly did embolden many to give a more public life to their long-standing resentments. Brothers Henry and William Packman were found guilty of firing the farm of William Wraight at Hernhill in November 1830 but their initial plan was to fire a faggot stack of Mr. Paven. Upon leaving the pub one late Thursday night, the arsonists changed their minds, deciding instead to fire Wraight's premises 'as it would not be so much trouble'.¹⁷ Clearly not only were many grievances held, often from many years ago, but the important psychological release of any Swing event was a major victory for the rural worker in their long-standing battle against their multifarious oppressors. When Richard Hodd, as a member of a Swing gang who visited Mayfield, Rotherfield, Buxted and Withyham in the Sussex Weald, exclaimed 'he was never so happy in his life as he was on that day', he articulated the most important aspect of Swing, the sense of relief and joy that the participants were being heard, that the communities were being heard.¹⁸ Indeed, an important facet of the interdisciplinary drive to the study of the 'everyday' has been an increasing appreciation that the interrogation of 'particular everyday contexts reveals just how important the contextual is'.¹⁹ This re-sensitisation to the 'tricky issues of context, specificity, difference and contingency' is especially important for protest studies. By effectively sweeping grand theories under the carpet, the very basis of many studies of dramatic outbreaks has been undermined. If we no longer talk of 'modernity' but 'modernities', then we must appreciate that social change follows not one set path as defined by 'power relations' but many paths, shaped by a constant process of contestation, negotiation and cultural struggle.²⁰ Protests, the non-'everyday', are the manifestation of contestation, and thus are central to how different identities, and therefore places, have developed.

¹⁵ Archer, *By a Flash*, p.1.

¹⁶ Prosecution Brief prepared by the Treasury Solicitor in the case of the King vs. Elizabeth Studdam for Arson, Kent Winter Assizes 1830, P[ublic]R[ecord]O[ffice] T[reasury] S[olicitor], 11/943.

¹⁷ Prosecution brief prepared by the Treasury Solicitor in the case of the King vs. Henry and William Packman for Arson, Kent Winter Assizes 1830, PRO TS 11/943.

¹⁸ Prosecution brief prepared by the Treasury Solicitor in the case of the King, for William Endersby Esq, against Richard Hodd, John Wickens for Riot, Lewes Winter Assizes 1830, PRO TS 11/1007.

¹⁹ N. Thrift, *Spatial Formations* (London, 1994), p.227.

²⁰ M. Ogborn, *Spaces of Modernity: London's Geographies, 1680-1780* (London, 1998), p.2. F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism: The Workhouse System, 1834-1884* (Cambridge, 1993), especially chapter 1. D. Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations* (Oxford, 1994), p.203.

It is clear therefore that Swing, like any exceptional mass outbreak of protest, needs to be situated both within the broad social and economic contexts and the prior histories of resistance within Swing communities. Outside of the context of other events *all* events are exceptional. Despite the clarity and increasing clamour of these calls few historians have managed such a synthesis, partly reflecting pressures within the academy away from the production of substantial monologues. The late David Jones realised that the Welsh 'Rebecca Riots' needed to be viewed 'in the wider context of illegal activities and in a longer chronological perspective' as 'strands of the movement were present before and after [Rebecca]'. However his excellent and influential *Rebecca's Children* highlights an important paradox; whilst it was concerned to locate the Rebecca Riots in space and time it was a study essentially about *her* influence on *her* children, not *her* per se. The vast canon of protest work on eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Britain is similarly out of focus.

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Another stumbling block towards the historical study of everyday forms of rural resistance is the oxymoronic nature of the call. Whereas through various forms of ethnographic research, not least participant observation, the 'everyday' can be uncovered, the archive is forever limited to what was recorded. 'Rescuing' the beliefs, aspirations, talents, angers, worries and loves of the vast majority of the English population from not only the condescension of posterity but also importantly the propagandist myths of early political reformers and also the early folklorists will almost inevitably lead to new condescensions and distortions for these voices are nearly always most audible in those situations which are not 'everyday'. The privilege granted to protest studies within social history is a function of this problem; outside of the statutory recording of births, marriages and deaths, or from 1841 onwards the decennial Census, most late eighteenth and early nineteenth century rural proletarians were recorded only when they were caught living against the grain. Therefore as the apparatus of state did not record the thousand little strategies of resistance, the writing of everyday forms of resistance within History, despite, as Ludtke sees it, attempting to emphasise the agency of people and not the power of static structures, tends to replicate abstract structures of power rather than social lives.²²

This shift from structuralism and the concurrent emphasis on the importance of social practices also finds echoes in Marxian theory. The belief that *people* are central to

²¹ D. Jones, 'Labour Disturbances in Wales between 1792 and 1832' (unpublished PhD thesis, University College Wales, 1965); *Idem.*, *Rebecca's Children* (Oxford, 1989); D.W. Howell and K.O. Morgan (eds.), *Crime, Protest and Police in Modern British Society: Essays in memory of David J.V. Jones* (Cardiff, 1999).

²² A. Lüdtkke, *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life* (Chichester, 1995).

the 'dynamism and contradictory character of radical historical change', and therefore, after Engels, that social change can be understood as 'the production and reproduction of real life' emphasises that everything is not only understood in context of human practices but is reducible to human practices.²³ For instance, the capitalization of production is seen as the outcome of actions by groups and individuals rather than some fundamental secular change. This emphasis on the importance of practices however produces a difficult historicism: the belief that past practices are recoverable because they fundamentally rest on the same praxis as current practices. This belief in the recoverability, and the possibilities of decoding, past practices on the basis that human actions and responses are relatively unchanging has formed the basis of both much social historical work as well as various treatises on both the nature of History and how to engage in its construction.²⁴ However, recently these beliefs have come under attack, somewhat ironically, from those informed and influenced by the French post-structuralist philosophies and the liberal-American ironic redescription of Richard Rorty.

Although historians have critically engaged with many aspects of post-structuralist theory, one aspect that, outside of 'feminist' studies, has received remarkably little attention is the belief that everyday practices are fundamentally about the production and reproduction of bodies.²⁵ This belief privileges the actor's body as both creator and document of human practices, or, less ambiguously, that 'action and lived experience may be grasped from the vantage point of the actor who is...embodied'. In particular many actions and responses that were once a product of sentiment can become torpid and are continued absent-mindedly in the form of a reflex.²⁶ It is 'reflex' actions that should in particular bedevil the historian, even if an event is placed both in the context of its occurrence and other similar past events, the irretrievable nature of such reflex and instinctive practices mean that the 'reconstruction' of the event can only ever be a combination of informed speculation and historical imagination. In the context of protest studies this has particular importance; as protests are a response to pain, as felt through the mix of the body/psyche and experienced through the context of politics and customary cultures, then it could be also be seen as a way in which the body after becoming dysfunctional re-enacts itself, whether in a strictly physical sense (the hungry participating in a food riot; or the oppressed drinking in order to remove both pain and fear, to become

²³ *Ibid.*, p.6.

²⁴ For an excellent summary of these issues see K. Jenkins, *On 'What is History?': From Carr and Elton to Rorty and White* (London, 1995).

²⁵ S. Nettleton and J. Watson, 'The Body in Everyday Life: An Introduction', in *Idem.* (eds.), *The Body in Everyday Life* (London, 1998), p.2.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.10

physical) or in a symbolic sense (the ill-understood nexus of hand/match/flame in cases of arson). Therefore although individual consciousness, so central to non-everyday and changing practices, is not necessarily something that is recoverable at all, especially in an historical sense, even though it is embodied and therefore encoded, we can imaginatively speculate as to the probabilities behind these crucial changing and non-everyday practices. We cannot say though that because we too are attempting to produce and reproduce our bodies through our various strategies for coping that we actually have any direct link to the experience and practices of the past. Being human is simply not enough to write perfect histories but this is not however to say that the writing of protest is either impossible or foolhardy, rather that the archive needs to be viewed with a chary eye and its contents located within a theoretical framework. What we need to aim towards is not the (impossible) reconstruction of past social practices but conceptually and empirically grounded imaginative *redescriptions*.

III: (On the possibilities of knowing) Rural Resistance

By definition, to protest is to make a strong objection to something. To protest is therefore a *public* act, yet objection does not necessarily have to occur in a public sphere. We can object within our own private houses, we can object in what we write, we can object by avoiding a place or person that arouses our pique, or we can internalise our objection. The sheer popularity of the word 'protest' within historical literature is a function not only of conceptual conservatism but also because what the archive (usually) records are those public moments of objection. We as historians cannot go out into the 'field' and observe peoples' actions or listen to their beliefs, as registers of objection(s).

Bourdieu's notions of 'habitus' and 'doxa' are useful concepts to help us understand how 'objections' arise. Within our bodies we have durable dispositions which are a function of the principles that generate and structure practices and representations within our lived environment (habitus) and our experience (doxa). These dispositions generate rules and expectations that determine limits to usages, and disclose possibilities, which we use to interpret and regulate the events that we experience within our everyday lives so as not to disturb the structuring structures.²⁷ Much of this process is an unselfconscious reaction, however when the event opposes our dispositions we react, we resist, in order to protect the structuring structures. Resistance, in the form of, as Bourdieu sees it, 'ritual strategies and strategic rituals', is a reflexive process resorted to in order to

²⁷ P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge, 1977).

protect our self-interests. Such a simplification of a complicated canon of work runs the risk of exposing itself to inconsistency: our practices are not directly determined by antecedent conditions which form our 'doxa', rather our dispositions can change to best accommodate the 'event' we are resisting and our tactics of resistance. It is through these struggles of the self that change is manifested (internally): we struggle to maximise our own advantages.²⁸ Our reactions to those alien or undesirable events loosely grouped as 'change' are not always internalised but can boil over. Protest therefore occurs at these rare moments when, for whatever reason, we can no longer internalise change. To resist is therefore to call upon a whole range of strategies, both internal and 'public', sometimes overlapping, and often mutually reinforcing. Questions that ask why one place was subjected to protest when another was quiescent are simply not compelling: such questions should ask what made it impossible to internalise resistance within certain communities. It is within this context of the experience of social change, both immediate and long-run, that moments of protest provide an invaluable insight into how the English countryside was a hotly contested arena for the shaping of individual, 'class' and national identities within the meanings of rural capitalism(s).

Resistance is a profoundly spatial project. Of course capital 'strives to valorise itself through sucking the blood of the most vulnerable workforces, wherever they are', but the *sites* of resistance to capitalism, and other vampires, remain of key importance for they are located precisely within people's lived environments.²⁹ Bossenden Wood in Kent, the location of the last pitched battle fought on English soil, was not only a collection of trees but also a place where survival, leisure and complex customs all interacted to produce a distinctly different habitus for each participant in the battle, let alone the different meanings invested in the site for the soldiers, magistrates and farmers also present.³⁰ Covert acts of resistance are also profoundly spatial; place is paramount to the way in which oppressions are felt and to the ways in which it is possible to resist. For instance, the majority of cases of arson in the countryside deliberately attacked agricultural property located on the farmstead; the farmers' space once inviolate is symbolically and psychologically warped into a very public space. Indeed much the same spatial symbolics lay behind poaching and resistance to enclosure. Internalised acts of resistance are more problematic. Firstly they can take a physical form if the act outwardly appears to have a role central to everyday life, for instance the personal resistances hidden behind apparently price-motivated changes in shopping patterns. This can also take a slightly different form. Amare Tegbaru's study of

²⁸ E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London, 1993) p.102

²⁹ S. Pile, 'Introduction', in S. Pile and M. Keith (eds.), *Geographies of Resistance* (London, 1997).

resistance to government eucalyptus plantations in North-East Thailand has documented that, when sophisticated ecological arguments were mobilised by villagers to condemn the plantations, they were ignored by the director of the plantations on the basis that 'they are poor, they cannot understand'.³¹ Some resistances are acknowledged by the oppressor, whereas other more discursively or ideologically informed resistances are not, they are simply not believable. Secondly, such 'acts' can have different meanings within different lived environments, or even different micro-spaces. Thirdly, internal acts, when they take no physical form, can exist totally independently of local context in the sense that the 'event' that is being resisted is distanced and has no actual manifestation in the lived environment except in the abstract, for instance a news report. Such 'psychic' resistance can therefore take on a highly dynamic placelessness, which renders it invisible (something extenuated by the displacement in time between the event and the resistance) but no less effective. This form of resistance has been well exploited by internet-based protest groups. Resistance often maps itself 'opaquely and ambiguously *through* geographies of power (my emphasis)'.³²

Another theoretical problem emerges from this neat categorisation. Whereas to resist is intentional, to transgress is often unintentional, the crossing of a line which did not clearly exist within the perpetrator's habitus. However the act still functions as a form of protest, indeed supporters of a 'right to roam' provide a useful example. Transgression is judged by those who react to it, whilst resistance rests on the intentions of the actor, though it is worth noting that these are conceptual abstractions which are not played out in the 'act' but are useful post-'act' analytical tools.³³ Transgression is therefore overwhelmingly spatial: if one has to be seen to transgress, it is an act rooted in a place, and quite often the meaning of that place is highly symbolic. To this extent protest can be seen to be an act of transgression: going against the everyday practices that are expected in that place, re-spatialising it and creating new meanings of it. Protest is a spatial act of colonising meanings. It is a statement on how certain tasks should be carried out, which practices are important and appropriate within their lived environments: a kind of cultural resistance. When these moral judgements are shared and we are able to conceive of a better state of affairs than the present suffering, the act of protest becomes overwhelmingly a revolutionary project. Each action becomes a sort of unprecedented confrontation between

³⁰ see Barry Reay's wonderful *The Last Rising of the Agricultural Labourers* for a description of the events leading up to the 'battle' and the pitched 'insurrection' itself.

³¹ A. Tegbaru, 'Environmentalism as Resistance in Northeast Thailand: The Village Perspective', in I. Trankell and L. Summers (eds.), *Facets of Power and its Limitations: Political Culture in Southeast Asia* (Uppsala, 1998), pp.247-8.

³² Pile, *op. cit.*, p.17

the subject and the world and the present becomes conceived in light of a revolutionary future, which negates it.³⁴

Richard Cobb in his otherwise glowing review of *Captain Swing* urged the reader on to the intensive study of Lower Hardres – the supposed location of the first Swing incident.³⁵ Even though Hobsbawm and Rudé's analysis was unerringly regional in focus, it seemingly uncovered many interesting, and some surprising, patterns and groupings, and none more so than in the locality where the first outbreak of destruction of threshing machines occurred. Cobb's question, essentially 'why Lower Hardres and not elsewhere', could be applied to many other localities central to *Captain Swing*.³⁶ Whilst Cobb's actual call has never been acted upon, the message has been emphatically received.³⁷ Roger Wells, John Archer and, Barry Reay amongst others have all demonstrated the value of a more geographically defined approach not just to protest studies but to social history as a whole, demonstrating the value of examining both events and, more broadly, aspects of social change through the lens of local social contexts.³⁸

Applications of this idea have taken two different paths, resting upon very different conceptual frames. One category attempts to highlight the complexities of what have otherwise appeared to be dramatic yet simplistic and reactionary responses of the, usually rural, poor to systematic oppression. Barry Reay's aforementioned study of the millenarian last pitched battle fought on English soil and, to a lesser extent, David Eastwood's work on the resistance to the enclosure of Otmoor during the Swing period are both attempts to place protest events under the microscope; to consider in detail both the local social contexts, the genesis and the event itself, the responses of the authorities and of the wider community, and the aftermath. The other category however uses the small area study to provide examples of aspects of social change not because that locale is exceptionally interesting on its own terms but because it is representative of the 'broader picture', a too often un-contended assumption, and is blessed with a well-endowed archival legacy.³⁹

³³ T. Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression* (London, 1996).

³⁴ after J.P. Satre, *Being and Nothingness: An essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (London, translated 1956).

³⁵ Although this has later been proved incorrect. The first event occurred in Elham, a village six miles due south of Lower Hardres.

³⁶ R. Cobb, 'Review of *Captain Swing*', *Times Literary Supplement*, 3524 (1969). Here I specifically mean Hobsbawm and Rudé's *Captain Swing* rather than the 'Swing Riots' per se, as Cobb's incitement was based not on any 'reality' but on a specific historicism.

³⁷ Indeed as I have already shown due to the non-listing of the first threshing machine destroyed by the original gang of men in East Kent, Cobb consequently mis-locates his call.

³⁸ The journal *Rural History* has been at the forefront of promoting intensive, localised studies. Local Population Studies has also been a fervent advocate of the small area study particular in respect to fertility transitions.

³⁹ Recent examples from the journal *Rural History*, arguably the key supporter and propagandist of this approach, includes Paul Hudson and Dennis Mills' paper on the emigration recruitment process in

Whilst much of this work, showing a distinctly post-Thompsonian influence, has been pragmatically driven to small area studies, some of this work has been somewhat more theoretically driven. Whilst the influence of the French *Annales* school on British social history has been strongly felt, and documented, the influence of Carlo Ginzburg and his fellow northern Italian ‘microhistorians’ has been somewhat less obvious despite the clear parallel in the drive to examine social processes in small areas,⁴⁰ or as Muir sees it ‘to isolate and test the many abstractions of social thought’.⁴¹ However, it is with protest and labour studies that Ginzburg’s approach is most closely paralleled in the English academy. Not only have both approaches shared a common belief that, whilst past agencies have no real and tangible link to the present, within the context of the record of the dissentient voice the beliefs and aspirations of those non-governing sections of society were most clearly articulated. It is no surprise therefore that when the participants in the so-called Wells-Charlesworth debate agreed on the need for the study of the everyday life of the rural proletariat they did so on the basis that such studies would be rooted within specific locales, but as we have already discussed there are archival limits to the study of rural ‘everyday lives’. Reay’s studies are successful not only because of his intellectual vigor and imagination but also because of the wealth of material available for his geographically limited study area. ‘Microhistory’ developed in Italy, and not elsewhere, precisely because of the wealth of the archival resources there, the result of a bureaucracy that did interrogate its people, and record the results, more intensively than England.⁴² This archival richness is possibly symptomatic not of a totally representative place or parish but rather somewhere that did things differently: after all, as Foucault tells us, the drive to record was central to the ambition to control.⁴³

In practise there was no clear boundary between acts of resistance and other everyday and non-everyday acts in the English countryside. Acts of resistance could be

mid-nineteenth century England focusing on Melbourne, Cambridgeshire; Brian Short’s article on the custom-recreation nexus in the late nineteenth-century England, using the exemplar of the Ashdown Forest in the Sussex Weald; and Stephen Hipkin’s richly detailed and highly nuanced study of resistance to enclosure in the Faversham Blean, Kent, in the mid seventeenth-century. P. Hudson and D. Mills, ‘English Emigration, Kinship and the Recruitment Process: Migration from Melbourn in Cambridgeshire to Melbourne in Victoria in the mid-Nineteenth Century’, *Rural History*, 10, 1 (1999), pp.55-74; B. Short, ‘Conservation, Class and Custom: Lifespace and Conflict in a Nineteenth-century Forest Environment’, *Rural History*, 10, 2 (1999), pp.127-154; S. Hipkin, ‘Sitting on his Penny Rent: Conflict and Right of Common in Faversham Blean, 1595-1610’, *Rural History*, 11, 1 (2000), pp.1-35.

⁴⁰ See J. Revel, ‘Introduction’ and I. Wallerstein, ‘Annales as Resistance’ in J. Revel and Lynn Hunt (eds.), *Histoires: French Constructions of the Past* (New York, 1995).

⁴¹ E. Muir, ‘Introduction: Observing Trifles’, in E. Muir and G. Ruggiero (eds.), *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe* (Baltimore, 1991), p. viii.

⁴² Levi, ‘Introduction’, p.xxi.

criminal or merely unacceptable forms of behaviour. Acts that had no element of intentional resistance could be perceived as being acts of resistance. In the same way that conceptions of crime both differed from place to place,⁴⁴ from one social group to another, and over time, what was considered to be effective resistance, or even constituted resistance, and within a community context who was considered to be capable of effective resistance, varied. However, it is important to reiterate that in the same way what may have appeared, and what may appear to the historian, to have been a criminal act could be invested with many other meanings too; what may have appeared to have been a deliberate act of resistance may merely have been accidental, but with symbolic overtones. Acts of resistance therefore vary in degrees of explicitness, if not necessarily effectiveness.

Herein lies a huge dichotomy. The post-Captain Swing literature on rural protest has grown in both quantity and sophistication in the search for a greater understanding of how the rural poor reacted to social and economic change. Whilst calls have been made to locate empirical work within theoretical considerations, attempts to so do have been accused of leading 'in some cases to confusion, and in others to misunderstanding'.⁴⁵ Beyond this quest for definitional exactitude, an important trend has been the blurring of the (historian-imposed) boundaries between protest, crime, and customary behaviour. Such a recognition though seems odd if one is not also to acknowledge that the very static, un-interactive, nature of primary sources means that recovering the meaning of any act is impossible; the implication being that the study of protest is nothing other than an exercise in obfuscation.

This project believes that this potentially crippling analysis need not be a problem. By studying the use of (what appeared to be) different protest forms over a long time-period the historian can glean greater insights into the cultural resonance of particular protest forms but also a greater understanding of the relationship(s) between protest forms. Moreover it is important to make clear that such studies are not facile attempts at reconstruction but rather abstract and imaginative redescriptions that, reflexively, balance probabilities against possibilities. I would argue however that first it is necessary to examine the ways in which protest forms were deployed in contingent ways: because of the need for context in such a study I would also argue that, for two key reasons, the in-depth analysis of protest 'movements' offers the richest gleanings. Firstly, the very nature of

⁴³ See M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London, 1977), especially 'The body condemned' and 'The control of activity'.

⁴⁴ J. Rule, 'Social Crime in the Rural South in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries', *Southern History*, 6 (1977), pp.135-7.

⁴⁵ M. Reed and R. Wells, 'An Agenda for Modern English Rural History?', in Reed and Wells, *Class, Conflict and Protest*, pp.215-6; Archer, *By a Flash*, p.3.

movements means that it is possible to contextualise one 'event' in terms of the immediate antecedent events; secondly, movements generate rich documentation, a result of their uniqueness being both newsworthy and worrying to the authorities. Swing potentially offers a uniquely detailed microscopic view on the ways in which the poor resorted to acts of protest: therefore understanding Swing is crucial to understanding protest both before and after.

Swing is also central to our understanding of rural protest in the sense that it was Hobsbawm and Rudé's pioneering study of the movement that kick-started such attempts. However since the publication of *Captain Swing* in 1969 not only has there been a rash of studies of so-called non-dramatic protest episodes but a growing canon of work has steadily undermined many aspects of their interpretation of Swing. Andrew Charlesworth was the first academic to attempt such a substantive revision: by sequentially mapping the incidents tabulated in *Captain Swing* he sought to show that central to the diffusion of Swing were politically motivated 'link men', the carriers and coachmen of the road. Subsequent work has returned to the archive to reconsider the infamous tables. John Archer has suggested that Swing was actually far more intense in East Anglia than had previously been considered, but that it represented only a phase in a broader movement stretching back to at least 1822. Adrian Randall and Edwina Newman have also archivally reappraised Swing in Wiltshire, the county in which the most threshing machines were supposedly destroyed. Their revision accepted Hobsbawm and Rudé's interpretation that Swing represented a turning point in the modes and extent of rural protest but challenged their interpretation of the responses of the local authorities to the parochial risings, placing a greater degree of importance on the role of paternalism in containing the outbreak.⁴⁶ For the south-east only Roger Wells, until recently, has offered any substantive revision, suggesting that Swing was actually far more spatially intensive than previously thought and its intensity, through the resort to arson, far greater in 1831. Moreover Wells, whilst indirectly undermining the basis of Charlesworth's revision, has enthusiastically embraced his thesis that radical politics was actually far more central to the rising than hitherto admitted.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*. A. Charlesworth, *Social Protest in a Rural Society: The Spatial Diffusion of the Captain Swing Disturbances of 1830-1831* (Norwich, 1979). *Idem.*, *A Comparative Study of the Spread of the Agricultural Disturbances of 1816, 1822 and 1830* (Liverpool, 1982). J. Archer, 'Rural Protest in Norfolk and Suffolk 1830-1870' (unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of East Anglia, 1982); *Idem.*, *By a Flash and a Scare*. A. Randall and E. Newman, 'Protest, Proletarians and Paternalists: Social Conflict in Rural Wiltshire 1830-1850', *Rural History*, 2 (1995)

⁴⁷ Much of Wells' work has dwelt on Swing but the following essays are his most important: R. Wells, 'Rural Rebels in Southern England in the 1830s', in C. Emsley and J. Walvin (eds.), *Artisans, Peasants and Proletarians 1760-1860* (London, 1985); *Idem.*, 'Social Protest'; *Idem.*, 'Mr. William Cobbett'.

Certain trends in this revisionary literature are clearly discernible. The temporal limits of Swing as laid down in *Captain Swing* can no longer be taken to be the gospel truth. Elements of Swing were present in the English countryside for at least 30 years and had escalated to such an extent in the late 1820's to cause considerable alarm, with many of these elements persisting within certain localities at levels even in excess of the heady days of late 1830. Abject poverty and penny-pinching vestries will no longer suffice as the sole causal mechanisms of Swing; rural and urban radicals sought to capitalise on the potential power of a rural uprising against the uncertainties and heady possibilities created by the death of King George IV, the ensuing election, and the revolutions in Continental Europe to effect radical reform, or revolution, in Britain. Moreover, underpinning these important aspects of Swing lay the fact that the movement affected far more parishes than previously considered.⁴⁸

This analysis therefore lends an even greater degree of importance to Swing, both as a genuine moment when Britain only narrowly missed revolution but also as the driving force of future protest trends in the countryside. Moreover, whilst Swing was exceptional, it drew upon already deep rooted and established currents. Nowhere are these implications more important than the south-east, where Swing both started and persisted far longer than elsewhere. Whilst Wells' numerous essays have deliberately avoided 'a major review of our knowledge of the so-called last labourers' revolt' in its initial arenas in favour of considering several points 'eschewed' by Hobsbawm and Rudé, his important revisions, in tandem with the systematic work of others elsewhere, have paved the way for such a major review. I have already attempted to start this redress for East Kent, where I have found that the tables in *Captain Swing* have underestimated by about half the number of Swing events between the start of machine breaking and the end of 1831, with arson in particular considerably more extensive than previously thought, thereby further putting into doubt the intensity of Swing elsewhere in the south-east. This archival reappraisal has also raised other doubts, not least over the tempo-spatial spread of Swing, thereby questioning the time frame of Swing in the adjacent areas and counties, and what actually constituted a Swing incident. So numerous are the questions and so great the potential rewards that before any attempt is made to place Swing into a longer-run context it is necessary to review Swing in itself and on its own terms: before we can understand Swing in time we need to better understand Swing in its own time.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Wells, 'Social Protest', pp.159-160; *Idem.*, 'Mr. William Cobbett'; Charlesworth, Social Protest in a Rural Society; Griffin, 'There was no law to punish that offence'.

⁴⁹ See notes 45 and 46.

But of course Swing did not occur in a vacuum. Any systematic review of south-eastern Swing must attempt to contextualise its constituent events within the local economic and social backgrounds, including the recent histories of rural resistance, whilst still acknowledging that, more broadly, variations in policy and implementation, which were striking, also helped shape specific labouring responses. Such complex tempo-spatial contingencies require a sensitive geographical analysis. As already, noted the ‘spatial turn’ apparent in the uptake of microhistory uses space as little but an abstraction, blunting much of its analytical powers. As Andrew Charlesworth has noted, the insistent localism of community based theorisations fail to explain important social transitions due to the ‘straightjacket of particular community milieux’⁵⁰. Nowhere is this ‘failure’ more striking than in the gap between small area and regional/national protest studies, a gap that stems from a lack of systematic research on the key components of pauperism. Whilst much detailed work has been undertaken in the last 30 years on the poor laws much has been of a quantitative nature attempting to locate the onset of proletarianization within a mass of statistics, or attempting to place policy innovation in the context of rising expenditure. Much of the more sophisticated and sensitive work, mixing quantitative and qualitative approaches, has been undertaken at the level of the parish or a handful of parishes. Consequently many regional descriptions of protest and local case studies have relied on very general contemporary accounts of rural social relationships. Thus archivally detailed contextual work is poorly grounded in terms of local social institutions and relations, as with much ‘history from below’ ignoring the institutional frameworks in which local social contexts existed. We cannot understand the local without a realisation that it is partly constituted by the centre.⁵¹

IV: Understanding Swing in Space and Time

These beliefs are at the heart of this project. By placing Swing into the broader place specific protest histories and by questioning the very nature of rural resistance(s) major gaps in our knowledge of long-run rural social change can at least partially be filled. From this standpoint 1790 is an important date, signalling both the beginning of Britain’s reaction

⁵⁰ A. Charlesworth, ‘From the Moral Economy of Devon to the Political Economy of Manchester 1790-1812’, *Social History*, 18, 2 (1993), p.217.

⁵¹ For a useful overview of the problems of much of the ‘poor law’ literature see Alan Kidd’s recent book *State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth-Century England* (London, 1999), especially chapter 2 and for an attempt to move beyond this impasse see: T. Hitchcock, P. King and P. Sharpe (eds.) *Chronicling Poverty: The Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640-1840* (London, 1996), not least the editors introduction and the chapters by Sharpe, Sokoll, and King.

This map illustrates the administrative divisions of Kent, England, into parishes. The map is oriented with the River Thames at the top and the English Channel at the bottom. Major towns and cities are labeled, including Maidstone, Canterbury, Dover, Ashford, and Margate. The map is divided into many small, irregular shapes representing parishes, with some larger areas labeled as 'Hundreds'. The map is oriented with the River Thames at the top and the English Channel at the bottom.

to the French Revolution and a period of dearth. The declaration of war by Revolutionary France against Britain in early 1793 dragged the country into a prolonged conflict which, apart from the fleeting peace of Amejins, would see Britain at arms until the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. Indeed, as Professor Wells has stated, 'no revision of the scale of eighteenth-century social protest is likely to alter the identification of the 1790's as a watershed in rural history'.⁵² The impact of war would be profound, an unprecedented period of inflationary pressure saw the real cost of living soar for the rural poor, forcing vestries to find various ways of allowing the merest level of subsistence to their parishioners whilst keeping the poor rates as low as possible. Price inflation also made many farmers rich, and many, keen to socially elevate themselves to a level in keeping with their new found wealth, employed bailiffs to undertake the day-to-day business of running their farms, as well as exploiting relatively cheap labour by hiring by the day or week, thereby almost putting to an end, at least in the south, the traditional mode of the yearly hiring of living-in servants, forcing many lads onto the lowest and most precarious ladder of the wage labour market.⁵³ These social dislocations sowed the foundations of Swing, and were made yet worse with the outbreak of peace in 1815 when thousands of demobbed soldiers thronged the south-east, swelling levels of rural under and unemployment already aggravated by the war-years investment in labour displacing machinery and the onset of a depression in commodity prices.

However, this thesis, after this introduction, does not start this process of understanding in 1790 but rather in 1829. As already stated, this thesis believes that the better understanding of Swing offers the opportunity to contextualise the prior and future use of protest through the microscopic study of the interrelationship between protest 'forms'. To start this comprehensive regional review of south-eastern Swing Chapter 2, in light of recent debates as to when Swing started and therefore what constituted Swing, examines the twenty month period before the first machine was broken in East Kent. I have adopted this time frame for three keys reasons: firstly the winter of 1828-9 was a period of extreme adverse conditions for the rural poor after a disastrous harvest, which, secondly, in neighbouring Essex provoked a campaign of machine breaking and an intense resort to arson, whilst, thirdly, in the south-east the resort to protest throughout 1829 bore an

⁵² Wells, 'Social Protest', p.157. My emphases are further supported by C. Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars, 1793-1815* (London, 1979); P. Clavel, 'New Interpretations of the French Revolution and their Geographical Significance', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 15 (1989); and, R.J. Morris, *Class and Class Consciousness in the Industrial Revolution, 1780-1850* (London, 1990).

⁵³ B. Short, 'The Decline of Living-in Servants in the Transition to Capitalist Farming: A Critique of the Sussex Evidence', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 122 (1984); M. Reed, 'Indoor Farm Service in 19th-Century Sussex: Some Criticisms of a Critique', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 123 (1985); A. Howkins, 'The Marginal Workforce in British Agriculture', *Agricultural History Review*, 42 (1994); S. Caunce, 'Farm Servants and the Development of Capitalism in English Agriculture', *Agricultural History Review*, 45 (1997).

uncanny resemblance to the events of 1830 as documented by Swing's numerous historians. These events though have not received any systematic attention despite their obvious importance in determining the form and geography of Swing. As I have suggested here, and elsewhere, the first threshing machine broken during Swing was destroyed by a highly organised gang of labourers, small farmers and artisans focused on the Kentish village of Elham. This chapter shows that this gang's campaign against threshing machines began in May 1829 with the firing of a machine of a Lyminge farmer who would again be attacked in August 1830. Moreover, other locales also witnessed sustained protest campaigns in 1829 and early 1830.

Just as the events in 1829 and early 1830 occurred outside of the context of Swing but were central to the ways in which Swing, as a movement, developed, so Chapter 2 exists independently of but also precedes Chapter 3's substantive revision of the events from the start of machine breaking by the Elham gang on 24 August to the end of December 1830 when overt demonstrations had effectively finished: the series of events that have come to be known as the 'Swing Riots'. As I have already noted, the empirical basis of *Captain Swing* is deeply flawed, even a cursory comparison between Hobsbawm and Rudé's (admittedly incomplete) bibliography and a list of all newspapers published in the south-east shows that many sources were untapped, and whilst subsequent authors have used a wider range of sources this has yet to have been done systematically. This chapter therefore offers such a systematic reappraisal, chronologically detailing firstly the intensification of the activities of the initial Swing gang beyond Elham to much of East Kent then Swing's spread into West Kent, then the Weald and beyond, in the process highlighting the importance of highly politicised individuals in diffusing Swing through the infiltrating work gangs and otherwise raising mobs, thereby challenging Andrew Charlesworth's thesis on the importance of the London highway in Swing's diffusion. By setting intensive micro-studies within a broader regional framework this chapter also offers, for the first time, an important assessment of the ways in which Swing's multifarious activists, not those in Swing gangs, related different protest forms, with many gangs linking both covert protests forms (most notably arson) and overt demonstrations or machine breakings.

Central to the way in which any mass movement develops are the responses of judicial and political authorities; Swing was no exception. Since the publication of *Captain Swing* little work has sought to address this relationship in the context of the south-east, the area where Swing both started and persisted longest, something made even more striking by Hobsbawm and Rudé's identification of the 'lenient' sentences passed upon the first machine breakers brought to trial as helping to legitimise machine breaking. Chapter 4 through a study of the reactions of both the local and national authorities, and their

relationship, to the rapidly unfurling events in East Kent and to the series of incendiary fires on the Kent-Surrey border shows that their reactions did indeed help to shape the movement elsewhere, not least through the adoption of a much firmer and more interventionist line by Home Secretary Peel, thereby fundamentally challenging all aspects of Hobsbawm and Rudé's interpretation. Even this firmer line proved ineffectual against the snowballing movement in the Weald, where the support of many farmers made even attempts to suppress ultra-mobile assemblages impossible without additional government assistance in the dispatch of extra troops. Even the militarization of the countryside could do little to stop organised gangs, responsible for most overt Swing acts, from attempting to force tithe reductions or extract wage increases, for, despite the use of spies, intelligence of planned actions was limited, and even if a military detachment was placed at the village believed to be 'at risk' Swing gangs proved remarkably flexible, abandoning plans and refocusing their efforts at short notice. Chapter 5 attempts to further draw out some of the discernible themes in the previous three chapters to offer both conclusions for part 1 and to set-up several contentions central to part 2.

Chapters 6 and 7 form the second part of the thesis, and whilst both chapters stand alone Chapter 7 follows both the format and themes of Chapter 6. Chapter 6 covers the period of the last severe grain crises in England (1790-1801), the final crisis of 1799-1801 supposedly being the final major resort to overt protest before Swing. Chapter 7 (1802-1828) therefore traces the development and use of covert protest forms in the supposed almost total absence of overt protests. Together the two chapters offer a systematic analysis of Roger Wells' contention that, in the aftermath of the brutal suppression of the national wave of food rioting in 1795, protest was driven underground, thereby also questioning Wells' account of the relative roles of overt and covert protest in the forty years before Swing and his account of the grain crises of 1794-6 and 1799-1801. This question is particularly important in considering why the south-east avoided the intense revolts experienced in East Anglia in 1816 and again in 1822, or indeed if south-eastern protest in these years did display elements of revolt that potentially could have engulfed the whole of southern England. Through a chronological analysis these chapters also attempt to trace the genesis of the Swing revolt, examining both whether the prior resort to Swing's weapons, not least attacks on threshing machines, for after all threshing machines were first introduced in the south-east in the early 1790's, intensified over the forty years before the revolt. The same question also applies to Swing epicentres: were they also the places where protest was most intense in the proceeding 40 years.

Part 3 in contrast examines the impact of Swing both in the context of the longer-term repercussions, especially governmental responses, and its impact upon the future usage of protest forms in the south-eastern countryside. Its constituent chapters, 8 and 9,

cover the period from the termination of the Swing Assize trials at the end of December 1830 to the end of 1840, although also making use of some material from the early 1840's, with Chapter 8 analysing the events in the immediate aftermath of Swing whilst Chapter 9 examines the popular response to the operation of the New Poor Law, Swing's most important legacy, in its first years of operation. Chapter 8 returns to Hobsbawm and Rudé's assertion that 'not all the labourers had been demoralised by the terror' [of Swing's repression] but that before the widespread unrest over the New Poor Law in 1834-5 the protests were 'merely afterglows of the greater fire of 1830'.⁵⁴ Whilst their tabulations of protest events in 1831 have come under close critical scrutiny, no systematic attempt has yet been made to reassess in detail the complex reaction of the rural poor to Swing's repression, events that were also set within the context of the intensified struggle for Parliamentary reform.

Popular reactions to the New Poor Law have been subjected to more intense examination. A recent study by Roger Wells focusing mainly on the rich Sussex material but also drawing upon some evidence from Kent, has highlighted both the depth and complexity of popular opposition in a region hitherto, apart from one dissenting study by John Lowerson, believed to have seen no sustained opposition. Despite these important studies much still needs to be done. John Archer's recent penetrating study of arson and animal maiming in East Anglia shows the potential rewards of reassessing those moments of overt protest through the lens of (systematic) analyses upon future protest trends. Chapter 9 therefore whilst fundamentally believing that opposition to the New Poor Law deserves to be studied in its own right, attempts to locate the study of popular opposition throughout the whole of the south-east within the broader framework of the impact of Swing on the social and economic fabric of the countryside, as manifest through the particular questions of how did the experience of Swing impact upon forms of rural labour organisation, and how did the relationship between the different weapons deployed in Swing change during the protests against the New Poor Law, which in contrast to Swing offered a specific clearly defined target.

⁵⁴ Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p.283.

*Chapter 2: 'The evil day is not far distant': Something before Swing or Swing itself?
1829 – start of machine breaking of 1830¹*

I

Whist Swing deployed many different weapons its historiography unanimously concurs that the breaking of threshing machines was its 'characteristic' form, thereby acknowledging that the start of the destruction of these hated machines in the Elham area of East Kent in late August 1830 marked the start of Swing. Beyond this implicit, and popularly endorsed, belief there is much to suggest that events elsewhere were equally significant. No serious claims have been made to locate the birthplace of Swing, as a movement, outside of Kent, but sustained claims have been made that a series of arson attacks in West Kent in the summer of 1830 kick-started Swing.

The Hammonds', writing in 1911, identified that 'there had been some alarming fires in the west of the county during the summer, at Orpington and near Sevenoaks', but also stated that 'whatever the origin of the first outbreak may have been, the destruction of machinery was to be a prominent feature of this social war'. Hobsbawm and Rudé repeated the Hammonds' findings but provide several contradictory accounts of their overall importance. '[The] fires began with the destruction of Mosyer's ricks at Orpington on 1 June... but arson was a weapon of rural protest that was already familiar to farmers and magistrates alike, and had certainly been practiced even in this part of England' whereas the attack on threshing machines was 'a bolt from the blue'. Such statements relegating the importance of the West Kent fires are seemingly opposed by their claim that of their five phases of Kentish 'Swing' the fires in north-west Kent stretching into Surrey represented the first. More recent writing has allied with the Hammonds' repetition of Cobbett's claim that the 'occasion of the first riots was the importation of Irish labourers, a practice now some years old, that might well inflame resentment'. Rule and Wells have gone one step further than the Hammonds claiming that this 'expulsion of customary Irish migrant labour from the north Kentish cornlands in the Isle of Thanet' was 'Swing's first real manifestation'. Such claims have received short shrift from 'Swing's latest historian, John Archer, noting that, since 'attacks on Irishmen in Lincolnshire and the breaking of threshing machines [in Essex] had already begun in 1829', Rule and

¹ Quote taken from the *Brighton Gazette*, 16 July 1829. For a list of all protest incidents in the period covered by this chapter see Appendix 1.1 and Map 1.1.

Wells' pronouncement is a 'moot point', thereby reinstating the destruction of a threshing machine at Lower Hardres on 28 August 1830 as the start of 'Swing'.²

As I have already proposed, the first threshing machine broken was not the one destroyed at Lower Hardres but one destroyed by the same gang at Elham on 24 August. The contentions though are still the same. All the above claims are rooted in the notion that 'Swing' was a 'movement' that gathered its own momentum, but disagree over what exactly marked the start of the movement. To answer this hugely contentious question it is necessary to consider the events in the twenty months before the fateful 24 August 1830.³

II

The deepening agricultural depression of the post-Napoleonic War period meant that bad harvests and harsh winters were felt even more acutely by the rural poor. The disastrous harvest of 1828, which prompted a spate of incendiary fires, including at least one against a threshing machine at Bromley, was followed by a mild but wet winter. By early 1829 reports abounded in the provincial press of the 'alarming' foot rot in sheep in Kent and Sussex caused by the permanently waterlogged soils.⁴ If reactions in the south-east were not as dramatic as in Essex, where both the destruction of threshing machines around Toppesfield and a spate of incendiary fires around the small market town of Witham attracted feverish national press attention, this bore no relation to varying degrees of severity.⁵ Malicious attacks on property in south-eastern market towns were particularly prominent, not least at Guildford where the problem was so serious that an 'Association to Protect Property' was established.⁶

However, it was a flurry of unprovoked attacks that created a deeper sense of foreboding. Rev. Hudson of Patcham was attacked whilst travelling in his gig in early January, and a month later Mr. Gambrill was mercilessly beaten on his return home after having collected the Elmstead small tithes, his two disguised assailants taking not a penny of his contentious booty. Similarly in mid April Mr. Rye, a respectable yeoman, was found in an

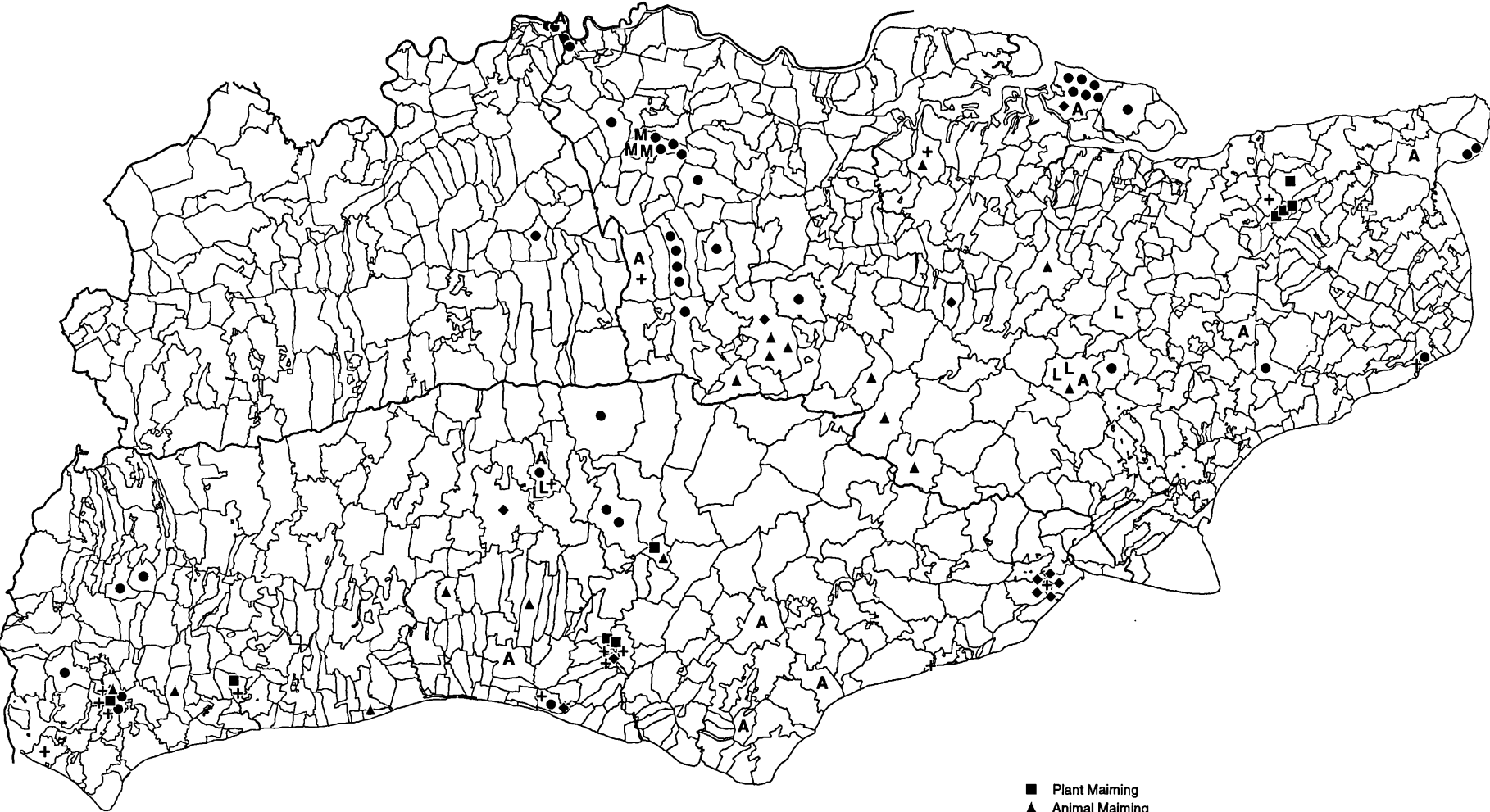
² Hammonds, *The Village Labourer*, p. 179; Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, pp. 97-98; J. Rule and R. Wells, 'Crime, Protest and Radicalism', in *Idem.*, *Crime, Protest and Popular Politics*, p.10; J. Archer, *Social Unrest and Popular Protest in England 1780-1840* (Cambridge, 2000), pp.16-7.

³ Griffin, 'No Law To Punish That Offence'. See also Chapters 1 and 3.

⁴ *Kentish Gazette*, 14 October; *Maidstone Journal*, 14 October 1828. *Brighton Herald*, 3 January; *Hampshire Telegraph*, 2 February 1829. See also Chapter 7.

⁵ *Kent Herald*, 5 and 12 February; J. Gyford, *Men of Bad Character: The Witham Fires of the 1820s* (Chelmsford, 1991). In Suffolk threshing machines were also later to be broken during the harvest at Ashbocking, Otley, Stonham Aspal, and Wetheringsett: Archer, *By a Flash*, pp.87-8.

Map 1.1: Popular Protests, 1829 to Start of Machine Breaking (23 August 1830)



Plus one threatening letter in an unidentified Sussex Parish, early 1829

- Plant Maiming
- ▲ Animal Maiming
- + Malicious Damage
- Arson
- L Threatening Letter/Notice/Graffiti/Other
- ◆ Collective Action
- A Attack/Assault/Assassination
- M Machine Breaking (excluding threshing machines)
- T Threshing machine broken
- P Political Demonstration/Rally/Lecture
- * multiple cases (exact number unknown)

'insensible' state laying in the road between Eastbourne and Willingdon, his head dreadfully cut and bruised, and unable to recall what had happened. An even more dramatic attack was made only a few days later at Westerham: several large stones were thrown through the bedroom windows of farmer Brook's farmhouse whilst he lay asleep. Brooks, startled from the attack, rose from his bed and peered into the farmyard, provoking his several assailants to defiantly let off their firearms before making a speedy retreat. On inspection the next morning it transpired his attackers had also broken several gates and gateposts as well as almost totally demolishing an uninhabited cottage. More blatant was an overt attack on the Hellingly overseer: such was the clarity of the evidence that his assailant, John Bennett, was found guilty of assault and sentenced to three months gaol and a symbolic six pence fine by the chairman of the East Sussex Quarter Sessions.⁶ Meanwhile a series of incendiary fires ravaged West Sussex. Mr. Peachey at Chichester fell victim for the third time in ten years when his haystacks were set alight. Mr. Parry at Heyshot lost a barn full of oats, and Mr. Ayling at Cocking lost a wheat rick. This series of attacks provided the background for renewed radical agitation for parliamentary reform.⁷

During the spring the level of covert protest intensified, with numerous cases of plant and animal maiming in Kent and Sussex⁸ coinciding with extensive flooding which severely retarded the growth of both hops and arable crops.⁹ In retrospect more precipitate was the incendiary fire on the farm of Mr. Kelsey at Lyminge, one of the parishes central to the later attacks by the Elham gang, which targeted the barn used to store a threshing machine. Whilst the fire 'only' caused £100 of damage, the historiographical ramifications are immense. That something like a campaign against threshing machines existed in the Elham area fifteen months before the systematic destruction began is indisputable. Therefore the events of August to October in this area should be considered in the context of a long-running local campaign. As such the events that are held to have triggered 'Swing' were not the start of a process but a more intense manifestation of an established process. That Kelsey's machine had been replaced by August 1830 shows a degree of defiance amongst local farmers, something that could only have distanced them further from the local poor and dispossessed.¹⁰

So bad was the weather during the late spring and summer of 1829 that the harvest proved an unmitigated disaster. Unrelenting rains all but prevented normal harvest labours

⁶ *Hampshire Telegraph*, 12 January; *Kentish Gazette*, 6 and 17 February; *Kent Herald*, 12 February; *Brighton Herald*, 18 April and 19 May. The *Brighton Gazette* (19 March 1829) had already noted that unemployment had reached chronic levels at Hellingly with 41 able men wholly supported by the parish.

⁷ *Brighton Herald*, 4 and 11 April; *Brighton Gazette*, 22 April; *Kentish Gazette*, 20 February 1829.

⁸ *Sussex Advertiser*, 11 May; *Brighton Gazette*, 21 May and 18 June; *Kentish Gazette*, 5 June; *Maidstone Journal*, 16 June; *Hampshire Telegraph*, 22 June 1829.

⁹ For the impact of the poor weather on the state of the crops see: *Hampshire Telegraph*, 4 May; *Brighton Gazette*, 9 May; *Brighton Herald*, 30 May and 5 June; *County Chronicle*, 23 June 1829.

¹⁰ *Kentish Gazette*, 29 May; *Kent and Essex Mercury* 9 June 1829. See also Chapter 3.

and late September flooding meant that the yet to ripen oats and barley rotted in the fields. Similarly most of the hops were ruined, with potatoes also yielding poorly.¹¹ That by early October the four parishes of Lewes were experiencing a record number of applications for relief is not at all surprising, and was further aggravated by the 'greatest influx ever known' of Irish labourers seeking work in the arable and hop harvests. In the 'lower parts of Kent and Sussex' nightly 'depredations' and mass unemployment generated a fear that the men working on the roads would form 'confederacies', an anxiety that ran deep enough to discontinue the practice and for the *Brighton Gazette* to speculate that 'the evil day is not far distant'.¹²

Popular responses were instant and unparalleled in their intensity. If earlier incendiary fires had served as a wake-up call, vestry reactions looked perverse – wages were cut, allowances reduced, emigration forcefully promoted and in some parishes healthcare provisions cut back.¹³ Protests during the harvest initially focused on farmers within market town parishes. The geography of the protests and the resort to animal maiming over other protest forms shows two things: firstly that a poor harvest impacted upon incomes of the 'urban' labouring poor as well as those who lived in villages, a situation exacerbated by the horrendous state of trade, the worst it had ever been according to the old inhabitants of Lewes; and that during periods of sustained rain the firing of stacks and barns was much harder to achieve and would probably have less effect.¹⁴ The rural poor were comparatively muted, a late August incendiary attack against the barns of Rev. Porcher at Oakwood near Chichester, the result of having turned some people off the fields for gleaning before the wheat was actually carried in, and the malicious opening of a sluice, thereby flooding the

¹¹ *Brighton Herald*, 11 and 18 July, 15 August, 3 and 10 October; *Brighton Gazette*, 24 September, 1 and 8 October; *Kentish Gazette*, 24 July; *Hampshire Telegraph*, 24 August, 14 and 28 September, and 5 October; *County Chronicle*, 25 August; *Kent Herald*, 3 September and 17 September 1829.

¹² *Brighton Gazette*, 16 July and 10 September; *Kentish Gazette*, 24 July; *Brighton Guardian*, 14 October 1829. The most apocryphal tale comes from Westbourne, in the fertile coastal plains of West Sussex. The vestry had noted in early March that unemployment had greatly increased, this situation was intensified by the 'continually wet' harvest, so deep now was the rural depression that Edward Tollerey, a once 'Respectable - Oppulent - and Resident parishioner' who 'having had to bear up under his misfortunes as long as he possibly could' was forced to apply to this Vestry for a weekly allowance 'until he can get into some Employment'. The vestry, despite his former status, still referred Tollerey to the Chichester Petty Sessions to be examined as to who his settlement - the ultimate indignity. Or so Tollerey must have thought; by the following October he was asked to leave the parish poorhouse, where he had been resident, for 'Improper behaviour'. Westbourne Vestry Minutes, 2 and 12 October 1829 and 1 October 1830, WSCRO PAR 206/12/6.

¹³ For instance see: Battle Vestry Minute, 6 November, ESCRO PAR 236/12/1/3; Tillington Vestry Minute, 4 December, WSCRO PAR 197/12/1; Burmarsh Vestry Minute, 23 December 1829, CKS P53/11/3.

¹⁴ For cases of animal maiming see: *Maidstone Journal*, 16 June and 4 August; *Hampshire Telegraph*, 22 June; *Sussex Advertiser*, 17 August; *Brighton Gazette*, 20 August. For the state of trade see: *Brighton Gazette*, 10 September 1829.

valuable grazing marshes with salt water at West Wittering in September, being the most notable cases.¹⁵

The immediate post-harvest period did witness sustained rural protests. Ardingley was a particular hornets' nest of resentments. The campaign started in late September with the destruction of the windows of a new cottage erected by Rev. Hamilton. For many years Hamilton had taken the tithes in kind but had recently 'farmed them out' to an ex-army officer, Mr. Rogers, who proved himself obnoxious by his over zealous collection of tithes on the garden produce of the poor, something to which he was entitled but which militated against customary practice. The extent of popular revulsion to Rogers was made clear when he received several threatening letters, and reinforced when on the evening of 10 October his stack-yard was set alight causing in excess of £1,000 damage. Rogers had done nothing to improve his standing in the parish by using a machine to thrash out his tithings; that the machine was destroyed in the conflagration was surely no coincidence. A crowd of labourers gathered at the fire and simply basked in the reflected glory. For this 'crime' Rogers wrote their names on a list of possible suspects. Earlier on the day of the fire 150 of the Ardingley poor had marched, armed with bludgeons in a 'very threatening' manner, to the Cuckfield Bench of Magistrates to state their opposition to a Vestry scheme whereby their children were taken from their homes and placed into the care of the farmers for whom they would labour for their keep. The events at Ardingley had almost all the ingredients of Swing.¹⁶

Even more telling were the series of incendiary fires on the Isle of Sheppey. On the 23 October a fire destroyed much of Mr. Kemsley's Eastchurch farm, for which he was later indicted at the Kent Winter Assizes on a charge of attempting to defraud the Phoenix fire insurance office. One of Kemsley's labourers was actually on the farm attempting to steal corn, so he claimed, when the fire broke out, and later stated he had seen Kemsley set fire to one of his own wheat stacks. The case though was thrown out by the Grand Jury as it transpired this key witness had quarrelled with Kemsley in the days previous to the fire over his pay, leading to suspicions of a malicious prosecution. It was not coincidence however, claimed the *Kentish Gazette*, that Kemsley's barn contained a threshing machine.

Between the Eastchurch fire and Kemsley's committal a further two fires occurred at neighbouring Minster, one on the farm of Baldwin Howe, and the other on the farm of Jeremiah Bigg, prompting a meeting on 9 November to discuss what steps to take to guard against incendiaries, too late however to stop another two fires occurring the night before: a second fire on Jeremiah Bigg's premises, and the other on his father's farm in Minster. Moreover in mid-July another incendiary fire had occurred, caused, allegedly, by lads 'firing

¹⁵ *Brighton Herald*, 29 August; *Sussex Advertiser*, 28 September 1829.

¹⁶ *Brighton Guardian*, 30 September and 14 October; *Sussex Advertiser*, 12 and 19 October; *Brighton Gazette*, 15 October 1829.

squibs' into a stable adjoining a Sheerness coal merchant's store, destroying seven houses and damaging numerous others. Two years earlier an equally destructive fire had also started on the same premises. The pre- and post-harvest fires, according to the *Kent and Essex Mercury*, were all linked.¹⁷

Further incendiary fires occurred at Ramsgate, where the theatre was burned down, with a further two cases at Bohemia House, the Sussex mansion of the Earl of Sheffield.¹⁸ In total I have uncovered sixteen fires for 1829, almost equalling the total recorded for 1822, the year that set the pre-Swing record for the number of cases in the south-east. Whilst the seventeen incendiary fires in 1822 occurred in seventeen different parishes, the sixteen fires in 1829 occurred in only eleven different parishes, with nine of the fires occurring between October and December.¹⁹ The south-east was not alone in experiencing a rapid upturn in the level of arson, the *County Chronicle* reporting in early November that it had received 'many reports' of incendiary fires throughout southern and central England.²⁰

This period also saw a resort to other forms of popular protest: two people lost horses and pigs to maimers at Tunbridge Wells, whilst in late December at least seventeen farmers in the area around Hawkhurst had the tails and manes cut off their horses.²¹ The record numbers of itinerant Irish harvest labourers, estimated for the whole of England to be 100,000 for the 1829 season, would inevitably provoke resistance during so poor a harvest. However such was their belief in their right to work that the most dramatic and bloody riot occurred at the Chart farm of James Ellis, not between English and Irish labourers but amongst Irish labourers.²²

III

The winter of 1829-30 was severely cold with the snows that covered the last part of the harvest not clearing until early spring. The intense cold stopped most fieldwork altogether, ploughing frozen soil being an almost impossible task. Other non-field labourers were also 'thrown out of work' by the snow and heavy frosts, not least bricklayers whose work also became impossible. At Brighton such was the effect on all trades that by the beginning of January the applications for relief reached new heights and at Canterbury the workhouse had a record number of inmates. Town after town entered into subscriptions to set-up soup

¹⁷ *Maidstone Journal*, 14 July; 3 and 10 November, and 22 December; *Kent Herald*, 29 October; *Kentish Gazette*, 6 November; *Kent and Essex Mercury*, 16 November 1829. See also Map 1.1.

¹⁸ *Sussex Advertiser*, 2 November; *Maidstone Journal*, 8 December; *Kent and Essex Mercury*, 29 December 1829.

¹⁹ See Appendix 1.1 and Chapter 7.

²⁰ *County Chronicle*, 3 November 1829.

²¹ *Maidstone Journal*, 6 October and 22 December; *Brighton Gazette*, 8 October 1829.

kitchens, and at Margate a proposal was debated, and rejected, to levy a special rate to alleviate the suffering of the poor.

The impact of the prolonged cold also meant that the expenditure necessary to heat dwellings rose. The cost of heating was already the second biggest part of the household expenditure for the rural poor therefore the impact was dramatic. Rising demand for fuel also meant that the cost of coals and faggots rose.²³ Declining incomes through lack of work and rising fuel costs acted to squeeze the poor to a point beyond subsistence, though there is precious little evidence to suggest rural vestries tackled even such short-term crises despite their members successfully clamouring for lower tithes and farm rents. Their inhumanity totally refutes Cobbett's Old Englander assertion that 'it is not we [farmers] who are the cause of their sufferings': indeed the merciless response(s) by vestries to the severity of the winter were invoked by many 'Swing' participants justifying their actions. Support for such a view was expressed, albeit tacitly, by a Surrey magistrate to a meeting of fellow magistrates gathered at the County Epiphany Quarter Sessions, who admitted the gaol allowance was more than agricultural labourers could earn in a day, thereby provoking many to commit crimes for the sole purpose of being provided for in gaol.²⁴

The winter months of 1830, though, did not witness so spectacular an outbreak of protest as the last months of 1829. However, certain features are worth observing: in Weald and Downland areas attacks on animals predominated; the cutting of horses manes and tails reached epidemic proportions, with the areas around Goudhurst and Ditchling particularly affected.²⁵ At Bethersden Mr. Lansdell, the assistant overseer, received several threatening letters before, in mid February at a parish meeting, he was peppered with shot from close range, only narrowly avoiding injury. The system of compulsory spade husbandry for all Bethersden relief claimants had generated much irritation, not least because of the pitiful eight shillings a week wage. George Balcomb, a 'spade labourer' who had received assistance from the parish to emigrate to America, on his departure admitted that he was responsible for the shooting, telling the authorities that if they examined a certain place they would find the pistol, along with other items he had stolen from local farmers. Despite his full confession, no attempt was made to detain him, understandably given the cost of bringing a prosecution that

²² *Maidstone Journal*, 20 October; *Brighton Gazette*, 31 December 1829.

²³ *Brighton Herald*, 2 and 16 January; *Maidstone Journal*, 5 January; *Kentish Chronicle*, 12 and 26 January, and 9 February; *Reading Mercury*, 8 February 1830.

²⁴ *Cobbett's Political Register*, 2 January; *Reading Mercury*, 11 January; *Berkshire Chronicle*, 16 January; *Kentish Chronicle*, 19 January; *Rochester Gazette*, 26 January; *Maidstone Gazette*, 26 January and 2 February; *Kentish Gazette*, 2, 9 and 12 February. The only discernible innovations to help ease labouring distress were allotments and assisted emigration schemes: *Rochester Gazette*, 12 January; Brookland Vestry Minute, 18 February, CKS P49/8/4; Battle Vestry Minute, 5 March, ESCRO PAR 236/12/1/3; Snave Vestry Minute, 6 and 18 March 1830, CKS U442 O22/1.

²⁵ *Maidstone Journal*, 19 January; *Kent Herald*, 21 January; *Brighton Gazette*, 21 January; *Sussex Advertiser*, 15 February 1830.

would be pointless anyway considering his imminent emigration.²⁶ Elsewhere different tactics were deployed. Another fire at Sheerness took on sinister overtones when the leather pipes of the fire engine were cut; a few months later it was reported that several fire insurance offices had directed not to allow any new policies for buildings in Sheerness not built from stone and tiles. At Hadlow a wheelwright also fell foul of incendiaries; and, at Rotherhithe a builder's premises were destroyed after being wilfully set on fire. Mr. Jennings, a Westwell farmer, had a sheep stolen - an almost daily occurrence in Kent - and shortly after received a threatening letter attached to part of the skin of the stolen sheep.²⁷

Meetings and petitions calling for parliamentary reform were not uncommon throughout England during the first few months of 1830, but many also displayed radical and ultra-radical tendencies. Such a meeting at Buckland near Dover drew up a petition calling for the removal of all sinecures, an investigation into public grants, a reduction of tithes, taxes (including on newspapers), duties, and the standing army, suffrage for all taxpayers, and for individuals to only ever hold one government post at once – a manifesto almost identical to Cobbett's. The Kent County meeting also displayed radical leanings: a petition drawn up calling for parliamentary reform was subject to a proposed amendment calling for the appropriation of all church property for 'national purposes'. This amendment received a horrified reaction from the Country grandees, including the Sheriff who decided that the votes against the motion outweighed those for it, despite the sea of hands in favour. Cobbett was not too disappointed, though, as 'the haughty and oppressive hierarchy... got a blow, which ought to prepare it for other blows'.²⁸

Hobsbawm and Rudé noted in *Captain Swing* that in late April Rye was subject to 'violent popular riots in protests at the return of an unpopular Tory MP'. They were, however, wrong. The 'riots' were against an unpopular sluice on the River Rother, and had commenced in February. The sluice was erected, at a cost of £2,000 to local landowners, to prevent 9,000 acres of land flooding at high tide. It also, however, acted to lower the water levels in the harbour to such an extent that it was not navigable by Rye's extensive fleet of fishing vessels. During the night of 26 February a body of men accompanied by a band of music marched to the sluice and almost completely destroyed it. They returned again on the morning of 28 February to complete their destruction. Herbert Curteis, a magistrate, promptly attended and read out the Riot Act. The cry was ignored however, until the Coastal Blockade were called

²⁶ *Maidstone Journal*, 23 February, 2 March, and 20 April 1830.

²⁷ *Rochester Gazette*, 12 January; *Maidstone Journal*, 26 January and 2 March; *Maidstone Gazette*, 23 February; *Kent and Essex Mercury*, 16 March; *Kentish Gazette*, 16 April; Daily Report from the Metropolitan Police, 27 March 1830, PRO HO 62/5, no.693.

²⁸ *Kent Herald*, 7 February; *County Chronicle*, 9 February; *Political Register*, 20 March. At Rochester a petition was drawn up to specifically call for the abolition of tithes: *Kent Herald*, 29 April. The number of radicals at Chichester however was stated to be on the decline: *Brighton Herald*, 1 May 1830.

upon, on which the men dispersed. Curteis in a state of shock wrote to Home Secretary Peel asking what he should do with any people he might take into custody, as 'they believe they have a legal right to do what they are doing'.

Agitation was renewed on 28 April when a mob again descended on the sluice, which in the interim period had been repaired. However, the Riot Act was read and 'another party' with a magistrate turned up to prevent them from achieving their goal. The next day about 1,000 people assembled near the harbour, armed with various weapons, and finally destroyed the sluice, joyously filling the outer harbour with water. By the time the military arrived, the people had dispersed. A Bow Street officer was duly dispatched and apprehended six ringleaders for trial at the next Sussex Assizes. The disturbances against the sluice had occurred against a backdrop of petitioning against the return to Parliament of the popularly reviled but recently elected member for Rye borough, not exactly the election riot that Hobsbawm and Rudé claim.²⁹ In early June a plan to blow up the Western Bridge at Rye was foiled by officers of the Coastal Blockade who discovered the stash of explosives, though the motivation for the planned attack are unclear. Disturbance again erupted in July with a campaign by the so-called 'Free-Born Association' to widen the right to elective franchise. On Monday 12 July the association paraded through the streets and were later addressed by Dr. Lamb, the Mayor and unsuccessful candidate, who also rather foolishly lavished the crowds with strong beer, the resulting affray took a decidedly partisan turn with drunken quarrels between Lamb's supporters and those of the successful Colonel Evans.³⁰

Meanwhile, events on the Continent were generating much comment, not all of which was hysterical. In early April Canterbury clothiers laid off several woolcoomers in expectation of revolution in France. At Brighton by late August people were said to be wearing tricolors with the pleasure boats sporting hoisted tricolor flags. At rural Benenden a subscription was raised for the Parisian 'sufferers', whilst at Maidstone a 'convention' sent £23 to the families of those killed in Paris, proclaiming that they had not forgotten that it was with English money that the Revolution had originally been suppressed.³¹ A preoccupation with events on the revolutionary Continent certainly precluded the ruling elites from taking the increasingly clamorous events at home more seriously, adding weight to Dutt's claim that the Gentry reacted with 'passive indifference' to these early signs.³² That these signs included localised subsistence problems should have been greatly worrying. One such report from

²⁹ Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, pp.105 and 312. Herbert Curteis, Rye to Peel, 28 February and 9 May, HO 52/10 ff.640-2 and ff.642-3; *Kent Herald*, 5 May 1830.

³⁰ *Hampshire Telegraph*, 7 June; *Brighton Guardian*, 21 July 1830.

³¹ *Kent and Essex Mercury*, 6 April; *Brighton Herald*, 28 August; *Maidstone Gazette*, 21 September 1830. Wells, 'Social Protest', p.184.

³² M. Dutt, 'The Agricultural Labourers' Revolt of 1830 in Kent, Surrey and Sussex', (unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of London, 1966), p. 282.

Ulcomb in early June stated that the parish did not have enough corn to feed the population for a month let alone until the harvest.³³

IV

After several further cases of arson at Brighton, Chichester and Deptford,³⁴ the attention of Government was brought to a spate of incendiary fires in the neighbourhood of Bromley. An initial fire at the Hasons Hill brewery of Messrs. Tape and Davis on 29 May was not at first thought to be malicious but when farmer Mosyer's ricks and barn were destroyed three days later at nearby Orpington suspicions were raised. Further fires at Orpington followed: one on 3 June; Mr. Voules had a barn destroyed on 6 June (he had made himself unpopular by having lately pulled down a cottage built on a common adjoining his premises and turning out the occupants); and a third fire occurred on an unspecified premises on 8 June. Phillip Porter, a wheelwright's apprentice, was charged at the Kent Summer Assizes of setting fire to both Mosyer's ricks and Voules' barns. The trial rested upon the evidence of William Boxall, an unemployed labourer, who claimed that Porter had, a few days before the fire, stated in conversation that: 'There will be a damned good one in the middle of the place'. Boxall, on enquiring where he meant, was told 'up at Mayfield, where all the ploughs and harrows are kept'. However, Boxall, much to the amusement of the Gallery, was discredited for some other claims he had made, 'I say many things when I am tipsy, which I forget when I become sober', thereby acquitting Porter on the unreliability of his evidence.³⁵ Orpington was also the location of three earlier attacks upon a corn mill used by the Assistant Overseer to employ those out of work. The first attack was in late February when two large nails were put into the machine, which upon the handle being turned broke the spindle; in early April the iron work attached to the spindle was destroyed; the final attack was made on the 10 April when the wooden 'rigger' was forced out of its gear. After a lengthy trial at the West Kent Easter Quarter Sessions, William Eldridge, who had been employed in the mill, was found guilty and sentenced to nine months imprisonment 'to teach others by the example made of you, that...

³³ *Rochester Gazette*, 8 June 1830.

³⁴ The fire at Brighton occurred in a lumber-room of a domestic dwelling: *Brighton Gazette*, 29 April. The Chichester fire was on the common where several acres of furze was destroyed for the third time 'in a few years': *Brighton Herald*, 6 May; and, *Brighton Gazette*, 6 May. At Deptford a recently hired female servant was brought before the Petty Sessions for a charge of twice setting fire to her employer's premises, the evidence was however only circumstantial and she was therefore acquitted: *Kent Herald*, 3 June; and, *Kentish Chronicle*, 8 June 1830.

³⁵ *Kent Herald*, 3 June; Joseph Berens, Kevington, Foots Cray, 8 June, Bromley Bench, 9 June, Clerk, Whitehall, 3 September, to Sir Robert Peel, PRO HO 52/8, ff.89-90, 231-3, and 261-2; *Maidstone Gazette*, 10 August; Indictment of Phillip Porter, wheelwright, Kent Summer Assizes 1830, PRO Assi 94/2066.

if they attempt to interrupt the working of a mill or any machinery... they will be visited by a severe sentence'.³⁶

Before Porter's trial, a further fire occurred in the neighbourhood of Orpington, this time on Mr. Lore's Shoreham farm when on the night of 29 June a faggot stack was destroyed. The Government added to the £100 reward offered by Lore but also, and surely this is no coincidence, offered a pardon *after* Porter's acquittal. This period also saw fires occurring further south, in the district around Sevenoaks, the first of which destroyed Mrs. Fuller's barnyard on the edge of the Ashdown Forest in East Grinstead, with Mr. Swasland at Riverhead the second victim.³⁷ However, it was not until the period immediately before the Assizes that arson in this district intensified. On three consecutive days three fires occurred in three different parishes: the first fire on 1 August at Chiddingstone; the second occurred at Caterham, Surrey, whilst the third occurred at Hendon Farm near Sevenoaks. The investigation lasted well into 1831, when Stephen Gower, the occupant at the time of the fire, was indicted at the Surrey Summer Assizes, 'creating a great sensation throughout the county'. Gower, it was alleged, had set fire to the thatch of the threshing machine house and barn, where many of the Irish labourers employed by Gower had taken up temporary residence. Other than the statement of a convicted sheep stealer, given in an attempt to avoid the gallows, the evidence was purely circumstantial, though it was suspicious that Gower, who was insolvent, soon after the fire sold the rest of his property and quit his tenancy, and that he had used the cover of then current threats to all those employing Irish labourers that they would have their premises fired to avoid suspicion. On concluding the evidence, after a lengthy trial, the jury immediately acquitted the hapless Gower.³⁸

The third fire occurred on magistrate Jonathon Thompson's Sundridge farm on 3 August, the first of a whole string of arson attacks on Thompson's property, two of which occurred over the next week, one on 9 August whilst he was attending the Assizes.³⁹ No further fires occurred over the next ten days but hopes that the campaign of incendiarism had ceased were short lived. Mr. Masters became the next victim on 20 August when his farm at Sundridge was fired; it was said that his premises had been 'several times attempted to be destroyed', but no further evidence suggests when or indeed how many times Masters' property had been attacked before. Masters duly offered a £100 reward. Four days later Mrs. Minet, 'a lady of fortune', became the latest victim in the area when her Brasted farm was

³⁶ *Maidstone Gazette*, 27 April; *Maidstone Gazette*, 27 April 1830.

³⁷ *Kentish Gazette*, 5 July; Daily Report from the Metropolitan Police, 6 July, PRO HO 62/6, no.778; Undated list of fires (sent as an enclosure but has been detached from the original letter), PRO HO 52/8, f.302.

³⁸ *Maidstone Gazette*, 3 August; Daily Report from the Metropolitan Police, 18 August 1830, PRO HO 62/6, no. 815; *Times*, 18 April and 10 August 1831; Indictment of Stephen Stock Gower, yeoman, Surrey Summer Assizes 1831, PRO Assi 94/2100.

fired; reports that she was 'quiet and unlikely to have given offence' highlight the huge gulf between self and labouring perceptions of wealthy farming families. Thompson and Masters were thought to have been targeted however for actively suppressing smuggling and poaching, 'the joint occupations' of 'many persons in the neighbourhood'.⁴⁰

On the night of 28 August, Thompson suffered his fourth fire, prompting his insurance company to offer a £100 reward. The night of the greatest destruction, however, was the 1-2 September when Masters, Minet and Thompson all fell foul of incendiaries. Just as worrying as the act of wilful firing was the fact that many people were unprepared to help extinguish the fires, clearly a sign of popularly endorsed protest. A Sevenoaks correspondent claimed:

The expressions of the mob are dreadful: they said 'Damn it, let it burn, I only wish it was a house: We can warm ourselves now: We only want some potatoes, there is a nice fire to cook them by!'

At Minet's fire the pipes of the attendant fire engines were also so badly cut that they were rendered useless, with pails having to be passed along a half-mile human chain.⁴¹ Within a week further fires had also occurred in the vicinity, the victims being Mr. Harvey at Cowden, who lost several stacks and farm buildings, and a miller near Brasted.⁴² The fires, though, only represented one of the forms of rural resistance utilised: the *Kent Herald* reported that in the first week of September that the 'peasantry' at Wrotham were also in a state of 'turbulence'.

Allied to the incendiary fires were a series of often cryptic threatening letters of striking similarity. Huble, a 'poor widow' at Ide Hill, was threatened that if she was out late at night she would get a 'rap on the head' but that either way her house would be destroyed. John Warde at Westerham was also told his house would be destroyed if he did not comply with 'certain demands'. Mr. Morphew at Sevenoaks received a similar letter threatening not only set fire to his house but also to also to set the town alight at both ends. Even more intriguingly Mr. Nourville was warned that if he went to Mr. Tong's fire – 'so that no doubt he will soon have one', sighed an observer – he would have his head broken, but that he would have his house set on fire either way. The blighted Masters received several threatening letters. Mr. Manning, a local magistrate, in writing to inform the Home Office of

³⁹ *Maidstone Gazette*, 17 August; Managing Director of the County Fire Office, Regent Street to Peel, 31 August 1830, PRO HO 52/8, f.313.

⁴⁰ *Times*, 8 September; *Rochester Gazette*, 14 and 21 September 1830.

⁴¹ Managing Director of the County Fire Office, Regent Street, 31 August, Mr. Manning, New Bank Buildings, 3 September, to Peel, PRO HO 52/8, ff.313 and 259-60; *Rochester Gazette*, 14 and 21 September 1830.

⁴² Manning, New Bank Buildings, to Peel, 9 September, PRO HO 52/8, ff. 266-7; *Kentish Gazette*, 20 September 1830.

Minet's second fire, claimed that he believed his farm-yard was the next object of attack. Clearly the fires not only generated alarm but mass hysteria and paranoia too.⁴³

V

The intense frosts and snow in the first few months of 1830 hampered the growth of winter, and the sowing of spring, wheat, whilst the wet spring and early summer meant that final yields were disappointing, if not as disastrous as 1829. After the experience of 1829, when the record numbers of Irish labourers both forced down harvest wages and even the actual chance of getting harvest employment for local labourers, the rural poor would have been particularly attentive to the state of the crops and any competition for labour. As already noted, threats were directed as early as June to those on the Kent-Surrey borders employing Irish labourers. The next recorded incident in which animus was directed at Irish labourers occurred in late June at the Thames dockland community of Rotherhithe. This tantalising attack suggests that either Irish labourers were entering England through Rotherhithe and immediately became victims of xenophobic attacks, or, more probably, Irish labourers were being employed in the docks or the extensive local paper-mills. Chronologically the attacks documented by Cobbett in the Isle of Thanet were next. In July 'several scores of these wretched slaves poured' into Thanet and agreed with local farmers to reap the harvest at half the price of the English labourers, much to the latter's chagrin.

Feeling the injustice of this... they took the giving of redress into their own hands. They armed themselves with what they called BATS; they went to the several barns, where the poor Irish fellows were *snoozled* in among the litter and rubbish, roused them up, and told them, that they must *march out of the Island*. The poor Irish fellows remonstrated, but remonstrances were in vain. At last it came to actual force; and though the attacked party had hooks and knives, these were of little avail against the *bats*, which are green sticks four or five feet long, the thickest end being about the size of your wrist, which is not a small one. The invaders were thus marched in bands to a bridge at one corner of the Island, on the Canterbury road, and were compelled to cross the bridge, with an injunction not to return into the Island on pain of the *bat*, of which several of them had just had a taste by way of warning.⁴⁴

Clearly the attacks were well planned and must have required considerable numbers of English labourers to enforce. However, it was not only Thanet labourers that had to compete with cheap Irish labour. There was also an 'influx' of labourers from the Weald,

⁴³ *Kent Herald*, 7 September; *Rochester Gazette*, 14 and 21 September; *Kentish Gazette*, 20 September; *Maidstone Journal*, 19 October; Mr. Manning, New Bank Buildings, to Peel, 3 September 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.259-60.

⁴⁴ *Kentish Gazette*, 25 June 1830. *Political Register*, 24 March 1832.

where labourers were 'all now confederates...daily more estranged from their masters'. Moreover, evidence suggests that labourers from other parts of East Kent also went to Thanet to take advantage of the early starting harvest. Ingram Swaine, one of the principal Elham machine breakers, had spent the early part of the harvest in Thanet. Swaine, it was later alleged, whilst in Thanet had received 'reports...from Men from the Weald' which made him decide to instigate the machine breaking campaign at Elham. The 'reports', Sir Edward Knatchbull, MP for East Kent and chair of the East Kent Quarter Session, inferred, are of the sustained campaign of plebeian resistance in the Sevenoaks area. The well-developed agenda at Elham was emboldened by the success and ferocity of an agenda elsewhere – the essence of 'Swing'. Itinerant groups of Irish harvest labourers also fell victim in late August to the desperate attacks of local labourers at Jevington near Eastbourne, where at 2am they were assailed with a volley of flints in a premeditated attack. Such was the animism of the English labourers that one flint was dropped through the barn roof aimed at the head of one woman. 'Luckily' it missed her head, striking her torso instead. Interestingly, the *Brighton Gazette* reported that local labourers believed the Irish usurped their 'harvest rights'.⁴⁵

It is important also to note that, other than the campaign around Sevenoaks and attacks on Irish labourers elsewhere, other seemingly unconnected acts of rural resistance occurred in the summer. Arsonists set fire to wheat ricks at Great Chart, near Ashford, and at Brook, near Guildford during the harvest. In early June horses manes and tails were maliciously cut in the rural parishes around Chichester. An Uckfield farmer in late June had his hops cut, and at Sturry, just north of Canterbury, several young gooseberry bushes were maliciously destroyed.⁴⁶ Even more tellingly though, a deputation from the distressed hop parishes around Maidstone managed to secure an interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer in early June. Any reassurances wore off quickly. Half the hop duty from the 1829 harvest, the payment of which had been delayed, was called in by the Chancellor, not written off as many hop growers had hoped for, then the almost total failure of the 1830 hop harvest sealed the fate of many growers, unable to absorb the mounting losses.⁴⁷ This state of affairs was worst in the Weald where the 'mania for emigration' led to an 'exodus' of small farmers. By the middle of July most farmers in the lower parts of Kent and Sussex had no corn to bring to market and were living 'almost entirely on the produce of their own farms': they had 'nothing to spare and buy nothing' whilst the labourers were 'all now confederates'.

⁴⁵ Interrogation notes of Sir Edward Knatchbull, no date (September/October 1830), CKS U951 C177/12. *Sussex Advertiser*, 23 August; *Brighton Gazette*, 26 August; *Kent Herald*, 26 August 1830. For detail on the Elham gang see Chapter 3.

⁴⁶ *Kentish Gazette*, 2 July and 3 August; *Kent and Essex Mercury*, 10 August; *County Chronicle*, 14 September; *Brighton Herald*, 12 June; *Sussex Advertiser*, 28 June 1830.

⁴⁷ *Rochester Gazette*, 15 June; *Kentish Gazette*, 23 July 1830.

'In short' Cobbett noted 'all is going on just as I anticipated. Lucky are those who have been able to flee to the United States'.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ *County Chronicle*, 30 March; *Kentish Gazette*, 10 May and 23 July; *Rochester Gazette*, 8 June; *Cobbett's Political Register*, 12 June 1830.

Chapter 3: *Swinging High!*

I: *'If they break all the Machines I'll give them a Barrell of Ale':¹* *The Activities of the Elham Gang, August to October 1830*

The first threshing machine was destroyed at Lower Hardres, near Canterbury in East Kent, on the night of 28 August 1830. The precise date is worth recording, as the breaking of machines was to become the characteristic feature of the labourers' movement of 1830²

The precise date is still worth recording, though the date Hobsbawm and Rudé recorded in their seminal *Captain Swing* was four days late. The first act of (recorded) machine breaking occurred on 24 August, not at Lower Hardres but six miles due south at the small hamlet of Wingmore on the Elham-Barham border. That 'three or four and twenty' men came together that Tuesday night in a tiny hamlet remote from any village suggests a high degree of organisation: spontaneous it certainly was not. The next day, whilst busy reaping barley at Ottinge in the parish of Elham, Ingram Swaine was approached by fellow labourer, Selden Bayley, who after triumphantly stating that a machine had been broken at Wingmore the previous evening declared that a group of 30 men were going that night to break another machine at Grimsacre. Swaine enthusiastically offered his assistance and at 8pm went to Silver Down, the arranged meeting point: alas, nobody else was there. Swaine therefore returned home to bed.³

The following Saturday, Swaine, whist drinking with his father at the King's Arms in Elham, was solicited by Charles Carswell to go 'a machining tonight'. At 9pm Carswell, Swaine, and 'Sussex Harry' left the pub and joined a party of 57 men who had gathered in a nearby meadow. Their discussion centred on whose threshing machine they were going to break. Edward Read, one of the ringleaders, said that he wished to go 'to Collicks, for Gilbert will not work his Machine'. The gang had warned local farmers that if they did not stop using their machines they would be broken, warnings that some, like Gilbert, had heeded. The party proceeded to Palmstead in the parish of Upper Hardres, where Collick's machine was on hire to Cooper Inge. Swaine with two or three others stood by the yard gates to keep watch whilst the rest of the party entered the yard, 30 of whom formed a line in front of the house 'to prevent anyone coming to know any of the Company'. The others, armed with axes, saws, and sledgehammers, broke into the barn and drew the threshing machine into the yard. Within half an hour the machine was destroyed, the party

¹ Quote from: Anonymous Letter to Sir Edward Knatchbull, n.d (but September 1830), CKS U951 C177/7.

² Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p.97.

³ Deposition of Ingram Swaine, labourer, 6 October 1830, CKS Q/SBe 120/11.

reassembled at the yard gates, triumphantly giving three cheers. 24 men then proceeded to Stephen Kelsey's farm on the Stone Street, Lyminge, and broke a further two machines.⁴

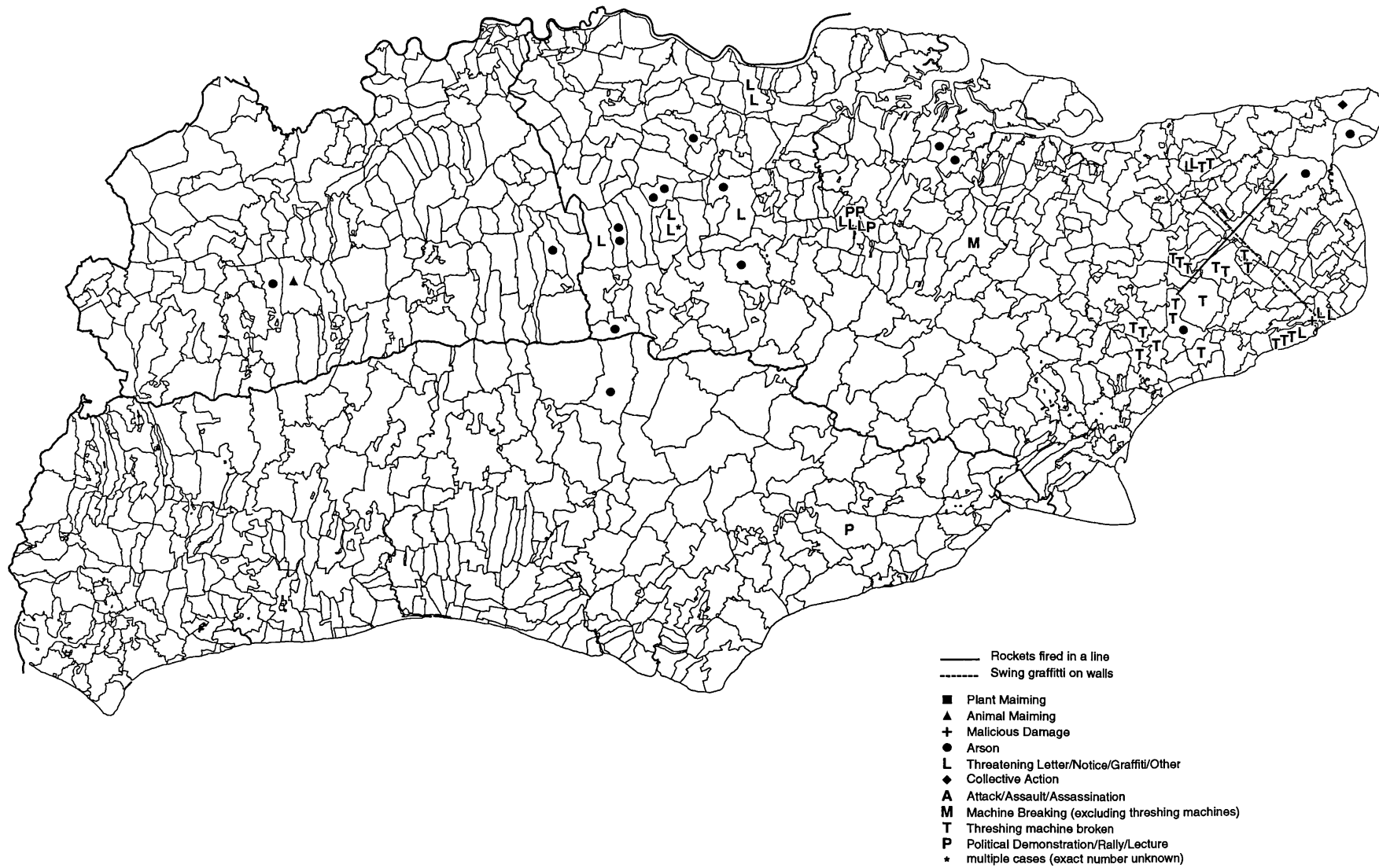
Whilst Hobsbawm and Rudé incorrectly located the destruction of Collick's machine at Lower Hardres, they correctly located the next destruction ceremony: Newington-next-Hythe on Sunday 29 August. That morning Swaine enquired of 'Sussex Tom' whether his master, Norwood Woollett of Shuttlesfield, Lyminge, still had the machine he had hired the previous day from John Hambrook, a local carpenter. 'Sussex Tom' stated he that had but also that Woollett 'will give the Men a good allowance if they break it and make a good job of it'. At 10pm separate groups from Elham and Lyminge met at Mill Down, from where their combined force of 40 men, again equipped with saws and hammers, departed for Hitchin Hill (between Lyminge and Newington-next-Hythe). Earlier that night Woollett had ordered 'his men' to hide the machine 'where they could' as he had heard it was the plan to break it later. Woollett's men, assisted by the worried Hambrook, duly moved the machine to Swaine's Rough in Newington, and concealed it amongst the scrub. Clearly Woollett did not wish his machine to be destroyed. Presumably 'Sussex Tom' had meant that by breaking the machine the remunerative threshing by flail would be restored, 'a good allowance' indeed.

At 11pm Hambrook rose from his bed and saw 'a great Number of Persons pass...I heard several of them cry out, like Hunters, Yo Ho!...I believe they were hunting after my machine'. By midnight the party, assisted by John Archer, one of Woollett's machine operators and Swaine's brother-in-law, had located their prey, and within fifteen minutes had destroyed it, before throwing it over the edge of a steep dyke. The Elham group on their return home were accosted by Woollett, Hambrook's brother and another 'young man'. Woollett entered amongst them and stated that 'it was no use to hang their Heads for that there were not 5 of them that I did not know', an attempt to make them speak, for in truth he did not recognise anyone of them in the dark. His actions evidently rattled the men as when they walked away 'some saucy language was made use off', prompting the witty Woollett to retort that 'if you go about doing mischief, don't let's have any sauciness'. A fortnight later the mask had been dropped: Swaine, being quizzed by John Hambrook as to his involvement in breaking his machine, proclaimed that 'they all wanted putting down' and that anyway the effort involved in the destruction of his machine was 'middling easy'.⁵

⁴ *Ibid.* See also: Depositions of Isaac Croucher, labourer, Thomas Larrett, labourer, both 19 October, and John Collick, yeoman, 8 October, CKS Q/SBe 120/34, 35 and 14b.

⁵ Depositions of Ingram Swaine, labourer, 6 October, John Hambrook, carpenter, 25 September and 18 October, Norwood Woollett, yeoman, George Hambrook, miller, and John Archer, labourer, all 18 October 1830, CKS Q/SBe 120/11, 4, 19a, 19b, 20 and 21. This was a portable threshing machine. Clearly the party believed that Woollett may only need the machine for a day. This is important in that even with machine threshing the potential output in a single day's work would only be enough to thresh the crops of a small farm, or a large farm with a small arable acreage. Thus either small farms were now using threshing machines or farmers whose business was predominantly pastoral or hop orientated. Machines were certainly no longer a specialist tool of the large arable farmer.

Map 1.2: Swing Protests, 24 August 1830 to the Canterbury Trial (22 October 1830)



The first report of the gang's activities appeared in the *Kentish Gazette* on 3 September when it was reported that almost 400 labourers had gathered at Hardres on Sunday and proceeded to destroy the threshing machines in that area. This claim is not substantiated by any of the (very detailed) depositions, the *Gazette* had probably heard reports of the statement made by William Dodd, a yeoman from Upper Hardres, on Monday 30 August to two Canterbury magistrates detailing the destruction of machines in the last week. Dodd 'understood and...verily believe[d]' that his farm would be attacked on the 30th. The magistrates, R. Halford and General Mulcaster, with some special constables accompanied Dodd back to his farm, but having waited several hours without any incident returned to Canterbury. Dodd, still in fear, again went to Canterbury, this time calling for the assistance of the Dragoons, as he believed the civil powers would be inadequate against a large mob. 30 Dragoons were duly dispatched and hidden at the back of the farm where they were to spring forth upon a signal, but again nothing happened. The effectiveness of the 7th Dragoons was in any case severely compromised by the hostility generated towards them after having, in a drunken frenzy, attacked the 'country people' at Barham Down Races on 27 August, breaking one poor man's arm.⁶

The next fortnight was relatively quiet. As the grain harvest concluded in early September, so the hop harvest became an important source of work to whole families. A full day in the harvest or hop field was not conducive to spending an equally strenuous night walking and breaking threshing machines. Some evidence does suggest though that attacks were planned for this period. On 13 September an anonymous correspondent from Swingfield Minnis informed the Home Office that for several nights he had been in great fear as to the safety of his property, and that on the day of writing the letter he had received 'notice' that 'a party of more than 100 men all armed' were coming to destroy his threshing machine. He warned that whilst the group, which had been 'going more than a month', initially comprised of Elham men, the men of other parishes were now joining and that they intended shortly to pull down the Union Work House at Elham. The next recorded machine breaking incident however occurred on 16 September at Brabourne, two days after which Dodd was finally served, both his hired machines being destroyed.⁷

Dodd's fears must have risen considerably since the he first gave the alarm. Richard Castle, Dodd's thresher, stated that 'on Friday and Saturday [17 and 18 September] it was commonly talked about in my masters' Barn... that my Masters machines were to be broken on Saturday night'. John Fairman, a labourer in Dodd's service, had on that

⁶ *Kentish Gazette*, 3 September; Deposition of William Dodd, 30 August, CKS Q/SBe 120/1. *Maidstone Gazette*, 7 September; *Kent and Essex Mercury*, 28 September 1830.

⁷ 'A Kentish Farmer, Swingfield Minnis, to Home Office, 13 September, PRO HO 44/21, ff.241-2; Orders to High Constable of Bircholt Barony (Knatchbull) for summoning a Special Sessions, 18 September 1830, CKS U951 C177/4.

Saturday evening been in Mr. Sandys' hop-ground in which about 80 men, women and children were at work. There 'it was the general conversation' that his masters' machines were to be broken that night. The plan had been in circulation since at least the previous Wednesday; moreover no attempt was made to keep it secret. Francis Castle, a Stelling yeoman, had heard from a Paddlesworth publican that the talk in Elham was that Dodd's machines would be broken 'some time in the course of the week'. On Saturday afternoon Castle had gone to the Cross Keys public-house where a group of labourers, including Henry Atwood, a labourer in Dodd's employ, were in conversation about the 'breaking of threshing machines and where they had been broken'. Atwood, without any sense of alarm or horror, tantamount to complicity, said he expected Dodd's machines to be broken that night. Earlier that afternoon Dodd, whilst attending Canterbury Market, was informed by three local farmers that they believed his machines were to be broken that night. On returning home Dodd organised a watch of the farm and the surrounding areas, including Chambercrown where he understood they planned to meet. Between 10 and 11pm Dodd was informed that a small number of people, in varying degrees of intoxication, had assembled at Stelling Minnis, and that more were making their way there:

[I] got on my horse, and went to W. Riles' the Magistrate and by his Directions I went to the [Canterbury] Barracks for the Military – and on my return with the Military (between 12 and 1) I found that the two thrashing machines had been destroyed⁸.

According to Ingram Swaine nine people from Elham, who had been celebrating Harvest Supper at the New Inn, joined eleven people from Bladbean, all of whom later joined up with eighteen others from Stelling at Hardres Court.⁹ Almost everything had worked to plan. Many of the party however were keen to carry on the destruction that night. John Whitnall, another of Dodd's labourers, overheard different members of the group talking:

Shall we go there now, or shall we wait till another night... How far is it to Bartholomews...It lays just over yonder...We had better stop till Monday night the great Wheel has broke our Hammer...We must get one stronger...Remember Monday night.¹⁰

The *Kentish Chronicle* intriguingly claimed that the '150 (sic) individuals [who] descended on Dodd's and broke his machines' then went to Mr. Kelsey's 'whose machines were broken a short time ago, but had been repaired and rendered at a great expense in working

⁸ Depositions of Richard Castle, thresher, John Fairman, labourer, Francis Castle, yeoman, William Dodd, yeoman, George Castle and Thomas Castle, sons of Francis Castle, all 19 September 1830, CKS Q/SBe, 120/2 f, b, c, a, d and e.

⁹ Deposition of Ingram Swaine, 6 October, CKS Q/SBe, 120/11; Deposition of William Hughes, farmer, 25 September 1830, CKS U951 C177/14.

condition'. This time, according to the report, the destruction was so complete as to render them beyond repair. No other evidence backs up this assertion, but circumstances do not refute the occurrence. Firstly, Kelsey's farm was technically situated in an extra-parochial part of Lyminge that formed part of the area known as Stelling Minnis, a landmass that in its entirety comprised of the extra parochial land in the border between Elham, Lyminge and Stelling. As such the men from Stelling Minnis present at Dodd's farm certainly returned to somewhere in the vicinity of Kelsey's farm. Secondly, Kelsey's machines had first been broken on 28 August, almost four weeks previously, possibly allowing enough time to repair the machines, though Kelsey would have been foolhardy to do so in what was obviously an exceptionally hostile environment.¹¹

II

On 15 September Francis Castle had asked Daniel Woollett, a Paddlesworth publican and farmer, if he would bring his threshing machine to work at Stelling Lodge. Woollett declined, as he had heard that 'it was chatted about amongst the Stelling People that they would not let any Machine work in the Parish' and that 'there is a man in your parish [Stelling] that says the first machine that comes into the parish shall be broken'. Woollett later claimed he never said that the first machine in Stelling would be broken, but that he had been 'laughed at about my Machine - that it would be broken and that there were several People in that Parish that would suffer a Machine to come in'. Castle however did question Woollett as to this man's identity. After mentioning several names when Castle said 'Henry Atwood', Woollett exclaimed 'you are about right...It is a farmer, a small farmer who has no ploughing land'.¹² Atwood, a different person to Dodd's labourer of the same name, had a little land in Stelling on which he kept '2 or 3 cows'. He also happened to be the Stelling overseer.¹³

Atwood was not the only small farmer to support the machine breakers. A small farmer at Elmstead wrote to Sir Edward Knatchbull, the local MP and magistrate, in

¹⁰ Deposition of Whitnall, labourer, 5 October 1830, CKS Q/SBe 120/8b.

¹¹ *Kentish Chronicle*, 21 September 1830.

¹² Depositions of Francis Castle, 19 September, and Daniel Woollett, publican, 22 September 1820, CKS Q/SBe, 120/2c and 3b.

¹³ In Stelling the thin soils, steep valleys and existence of a non-enclosed 100 acre common meant that the dominant form of agriculture was pastoral, and an area were many small peasant farmers still existed. According to the Stelling tithe apportionment Atwood held just over six acres of pasture. The overall land holding at Stelling was dominated by those with less than fifty acres: Under 1 acre, 31; 1-5 acres, 13; 5-10 acres, 14; 11-20 acres, 6; 20-50 acres, 13; 50-100 acres, 4; 100 acres and above, 2. PRO IR 29/17/344. For a detailed and powerful re-assertion of the existence of an English peasantry in the early nineteenth century see M. Reed, 'Class and Conflict in Rural England: Some Reflections on a Debate', in M. Reed and R. Wells, *Class, Conflict and Protest in the English*

support of their campaign, rather chillingly offering ‘if they break all the Machines...a Barrell of Ale’, his use of the suffix ‘Esq.’ also mocking the social pretensions of the larger local farmers. At Bladbean farmer Featherstone had also reportedly offered a pound for the first machine broken; his son had even ‘been out with them’. Other small farmers at Swingfield Minnis were also alleged to have taken an active part in the gang¹⁴. The area surrounding the Elham Valley was still well covered with unenclosed commons, at Lyminge, Rhodes Minnis (the area between Lyminge and Stelling Minnis), Stelling Minnis, Swingfield Minnis and Elmstead, and supported a thriving community of petty agriculturalists supporting themselves on very small acreages, often combined with other occupations. Although the depositions taken from the various members of the gang describe them as either labourers or tradesmen, such labelling hides the real complexity of the local social structure. As Mick Reed has stated, many labourers and tradesmen were also small farmers.¹⁵ That a small farmer was implicated in the threats against the users of threshing machines was not surprising, that even the overseer was indulging in such pursuits suggests that all but the most wealthy farmers and gentry supported the campaign.

The next attacks occurred two nights after the destruction of Dodd’s machines. For the first time it is clear that two different parties were in operation on the same night, and both connected to the Elham gang: one destroyed a threshing machine of Mr. Pearson at Somerfield House, Sellindge Lees, whilst the other group destroyed at least four threshing machines in the parishes of Barham and Womenswold. During the day several labourers had walked around the neighbouring parishes recruiting labourers at work in the fields for the mission. The Lyminge contingent gathered at Rhodes Minnis, ‘it was the Common that of every body’, from where they proceeded to the King’s Arms pub in Elham village where they were joined by the Elham crowd. The group, by now about 30 individuals, passed through Wingmore, where they were joined by a further 40 people, towards Derringstone Green, where their ranks were further swelled, before proceeding to Digge’s Place, the Barham farm of John Sankey. The 200 strong group entered the yard ‘whistling, singing, and Hallowing’ and proceeded to destroy his machine, and rather curiously two ladders. On finishing their task the throng called out, ‘Sankey, get up and bring us some Beer for we have been to work damn hard’, before throwing the ironwork of the machine into a nearby pond. Intriguingly before this visit the machine had already been half broken to pieces,

Countryside, 1700-1880 (1990), and with specific reference to Northamptonshire see Nesson, *Commoners*.

¹⁴ Anonymous letter to Knatchbull, September, Rev. Price, Lyminge to Knatchbull, 27 September, and, Unsigned deposition, no date (September or October), CKS. U951, C177/7, 18 and 22; ‘A Kentish Farmer’, South Kent, to Home Office, 13 September 1830, PRO. HO 44/21, ff. 241-242. Barry Reay’s *Microhistories* gives a very useful treatment of farmers self-descriptions in the context of East Kent, see chapter five especially.

whether by Sankey to prevent a visit from the gang, or by a previous visit by the gang is not clear though. The group left Sankey's premises, but with his bell, and walked to Mr. Holtum's Womenswold farm where they broke his threshing machine before later destroying the machine of Sir Henry Montresor at Denne Hill. A somewhat depleted party then proceeded to Broome, the residence of Sir Henry Oxenden, where despite being 'reasoned' with as to the 'folly and illegality of their actions' by two of Oxenden's sons, they also broke his machine.¹⁶ The events of that night represented a significant extension of the geographical area covered by the Elham gang, their efforts now stretching between the fringes of Canterbury, Hythe and Ashford.

Two nights later a body of labourers from Elham and Lyminge descended upon the farms of Messrs. Hills and Hughes in Brabourne and Stanford, respectively, despite the offer of beer from William Fordred if they did not. They were also joined by men from the immediate parishes. Hills' farm - Brabourne Court Lodge - was the first to be attacked, the party then moved on to Hughes's farm at Stanford, where on arriving they huddled together and gave three 'Huzzars'. Some of their number kept a 'regularly organised guard' whilst the rest broke into the barn and destroyed all the 'machinery'. Three of Hughes' men, out of curiosity, went to see what was happening but upon being spotted by the watch were warned they would 'blow out their bloody brains' if they did not keep their distance. The bell stolen from Sankey's farm was sounded, the party again gave three huzzas and departed into the night. Hughes later claimed that he and the '20 [other] persons [who] have suffered at their hands' were victims of 'the inefficiency of the local authorities to keep order and property inviolate'.¹⁷

The record certainly does not provide a full account of the Elham gang's activities. Beyond 22 September evidence of the gang's activities rests upon one exceptionally detailed letter to Sir Edward Knatchbull, the local MP, magistrate and Chairman of the East Kent Quarter Sessions. The strong organisation of the gang and the targeting of specific farmers conclusively shows that they were very well organised and planned, although few of the necessary meetings, liaisons, and reconnaissance missions are mentioned in the depositions and confessions. Moreover, they attempted to forge a gang identity and spirit

¹⁵ M. Reed, 'The Peasantry of Nineteenth-Century England: A Neglected Class?', in B. Stapleton (ed.), *Conflict and Community in Southern England*, (London, 1992).

¹⁶ *Kent Herald*, 23 September; Depositions of Ingram Swaine, and John Sankey, yeoman, both 6 October, George Youens, labourer, 29 September and 7 October, John Jefferies, labourer, 8 October, CKS Q/SBe 120/11, 12, 5, 13 and 15. Reports in *The Times* and the *Maidstone Gazette*, but not the Canterbury press, also claimed that on the same night Mr. Kelcey, a substantial Barham farmer, had his threshing machine destroyed by the same gang, a fact not supported by the depositions.

¹⁷ Confessions of George Youens, Lyminge, labourer, 29 September and 7 October, CKS Q/SBe 120/5 and 13. Deposition of William Fordred, 24 September; Information of Edward Hughes and Richard Hills, 23 September; and, Information of Benjamin Andrews, 27 September, CKS U951

through enforcing a formalised enrolment procedure, new members having to vow 'to be faithful to each other' and understanding that if any member provided evidence against the gang they would be killed, but any member taken into custody would be rescued. This mentality and strength made it impossible for the authorities, at least in the early phases of their activity, to procure any evidence from anyone other than the victims, hampering attempts to issue warrants against suspects.¹⁸

Evidence states that the gang also met on the evenings of the 24 and 25 September. On the 25th, a Saturday, 40 'young men' from the Barham area passed through Denton en-route to Swingfield Minnis where they were to meet with the 'other parties about the same time, hallowing together along the hills in this neighbourhood', a combined force of 150 people. On Friday the group from Elham did not join the Barham men so the latter group proceeded to via Elham to Hougham, near Dover. Whilst on neither occasion does the archive record any incidents other than the actual 'gatherings', it is instructive that on the Saturday night the gas lamps in Biggin Street, Dover, were systematically destroyed. Despite the 'very active methods taken yesterday [Saturday]' against the gang (the examination of some suspected ringleaders) that they could still, and were prepared, to muster at little notice showed their true depth of organisation.¹⁹ Whether the gang broke any machines on Friday and Saturday night is not known, but it is clear they renewed their campaign of destruction on Monday night. A machine belonging to Mr. Barter, a millwright at Ewell, was being conveyed on hire between Farthingloe and Hougham. The gang found the machine in transit and proceeded to remove all the ironwork, then set the remainder on fire. Between 100-200 men mobilised again on the following Friday night when they destroyed the last machine belonging to the enterprising Barter, this time on hire to farmer Rose at Hougham.²⁰

The initial examinations on Friday 24 and Saturday 25 September provided enough evidence to issue warrants against the key machine breakers, and on 27 September several men were captured in dawn raids. Further examinations occurred on the 29th. Due to the efforts of Rev. Brammall of Elham, 50 of his parishioners voluntarily surrendered themselves and, on 2 October, the day after the machine was destroyed on Rose's farm at Hougham, entered into recognizances to appear, if called, at the next Assizes, for 'they

C177/11, 10 and 19. Edward Hughes, Smeeth Hill House, to Home Office, 23 September 1830, HO 44/21, ff.263-6.

¹⁸ Unsigned Deposition, no date (late Sept-early October), CKS U951 C177/22; *Kentish Chronicle*, 21 September; Charles Sandys, Clerk to Canterbury Bench of Magistrates, to Peel, 22 September 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.271-2.

¹⁹ T.P. Junior, Denton, to Knatchbull, Mersham, 26 September, CKS U951 C177/17; *Kentish Gazette*, 28 September and 1 October 1830.

²⁰ *Kentish Gazette*, 1 and 5 October 1830.

would rather do anything than encounter such a winter as the last'.²¹ After this date the strategies of resistance adopted within the area were to radically change. Just after 10pm on 5 October Rev. Price's bailiff at his Lyminge farm noticed that his master's barn was on fire. Within a few hours the barn, full of barley and wheat, along with eight stacks were destroyed. Knatchbull informed Peel that Price believed he was victimised due to his involvement in apprehending 'persons engaged in destroying machinery from Elham'. Despite much feverish speculation and a virtual witch hunt against the suspected arsonists no evidence of a non-circumstantial nature was found.²²

It is worth dwelling briefly on Price's role. A retrospective investigation by the *Spectator* into the start of the machine breaking uncovered a public dispute between the 'most influential' local farmers and another farmer who had introduced a threshing machine. The open hostility of many farmers, to whom Price lent his support, lead local labourers and artisans to believe, so claims the *Spectator*, that the destruction of the machines was a 'meritorious act, and, relying on the opinion of their betters, a judicious act' and so destroyed the machines. Indeed, the majority of the Barham vestry, who had earlier in the year decided to terminate the employment of non-parishioners, decided that threshing machines should be put out of use in the parish. Despite this some of the farmers persisted in their use.²³ Rev. Price had also been active before and during the harvest in attempting to convince the farmers not to mow their wheat, as it was cruel to deprive the poor of gleaning, and presumably also to reduce the amount of labouring hours required by sickles as opposed to scythes. For those farmers that did mow Price claimed a tithe on the 'rakings' and distributed it to the poor, an action that later made the farmers comment that Price did not view the proceedings with the same horror as they did.²⁴

On the following day incendiary letters were sent by post to two individuals, both were signed 'Swing' – the first such occurrence. On the same day the 'dead walls' between Dover and Canterbury were also graffitied with 'the same significant word'. Two days later Widow Pepper, the occupier of farms at Hougham and Dover, also received a 'Swing' letter, stating her threshing machine was to be destroyed, and as such she should remove it to an adjoining field. Pepper complied; the same evening her machine was duly broken and set on fire. One of the letters read:

²¹ Rev. Price, Lyminge, to Knatchbull, 27 September, List of persons entered into recognizances (n.d but 2 October), CKS U951 C177/18 and 13; Knatchbull, Mersham, to Peel, 6 October 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff. 276-7.

²² Deposition of John Wakefield, bailiff, n.d. (probably 6 October), CKS U951 C177/31; Knatchbull, Mersham, to Peel, 6 October 1830 (twice), PRO HO 52/8, ff. 276-7 and 281-2. For a full treatment of the events surrounding Price's fire see Chapter 4.

²³ Report from the *Spectator*, q.f. *Kent Herald*, 6 January 1831. Answer to question 53, 'Rural Queries', 1834, BPP Vol. XXXIV 237e; Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p.85.

²⁴ *Kent Herald*, 7 October 1830.

You are to notice that if you doant put away your thrashing machine against Monday next you shall have a 'SWING'

As the *Morning Herald* correctly reported the combination of threats and the fearlessness of the gang meant 'many farmers are so terrified they have almost invited the men around to demolish their machines'. Farmers John Coleman at Kearsney and George Dell at Ewell decided to place their machines 'in the open fields, preparatory to their destruction', though whether this was voluntarily done or done under threats is not clear.²⁵ These were the last acts committed attributable to the Elham gang before on 22 October seven members of the gang were tried at the East Kent Quarter Sessions, and sentenced to four days in the Canterbury gaol. They were all 'to labour in support of their families... the court were not desirous to separate them from their homes'.²⁶ The trial, rather than stopping the actions of an active gang, which in the short term it succeeded in doing, effectively legitimatised and publicised the actions of the machine-breakers.

III: 'Temporizing with anarchists seldom succeeds'²⁷

Even before the supposed 'final' cessation of the Elham gang's activities threshing machines had been broken outside of the gangs' area. On 2 October two machines were destroyed on different farms at Sturry, to the north-east of Canterbury, and on the night of Rev. Price's fire Major Garrett at Margate had his machine threatened with destruction by a posse of twelve men, though whether it was destroyed is unclear.²⁸ The timing is instructive. Over five weeks since the first machine was destroyed at Wingmore Court, and four weeks since the first reports of machine breaking appeared in the Canterbury and East Kent press, the news would have reached even the most remote Kentish hamlet. The period also marked the end of the harvest therefore harvest gangs were moving around the county, and were, according to the Rev. Owen of Chislet, 'evident[ly]...in communication with each other throughout this part of the county'.²⁹

²⁵ *Kentish Gazette*, 8 and 15 October; *Brighton Herald*, 16 October 1830 copying a report in the *Morning Herald* n.d.

²⁶ *Kent Herald*, 28 October 1830

²⁷ Quote from: Sir Henry Montresor, 27 October, to Knatchbull, CKS U951 C14/4.

²⁸ *Kentish Gazette*, 5 October. Threatening letters were also sent to two individuals in the vicinity of Sturry and Canterbury between the 2nd and the 5th: *Kentish Chronicle*, 5 October. John Boys, Margate, to Peel, 17 October 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.209-10. The evidence does not explicitly claim that they broke his machine, despite Hobsbawm and Rudé's claims, but does imply that an attack had occurred 'because of their [Garrett's labourers] suffering last Winter'. It is also worth considering that as the men gathered incognito at midnight their intention was most probably to destroy the machine.

²⁹ Rev. Edward Owen, Chislet, to Peel, 29 October, PRO HO 52/8, ff.370-1. See below.

The *Morning Herald* reported in early October that provocateurs were going to public houses in unfrequented hamlets to 'get into conversation with the peasantry and excite their passions'. One 'of these fellows' was seen at Elham, dressed distinctively in a white silk hat and a striking blue coat. Moreover, from the Reigate area Home Secretary Peel was warned that 'parties from London', the correspondent implying political agitators, were 'stirring up' the labouring classes. At Burstow on the Surrey-Sussex border, Richard Garson, a labourer of Mr. W. Saunders, the proprietor of a large estate, was accosted on 6 October on his return from work and quizzed about Saunders. Garson was again accosted on 8 October. This time he was dragged into some straw where three men stripped him of his clothes, for no apparent reason, and cautioned him 'you have been very quiet in these parts but we shall give you a turn before the Winter is out', mentioning the names of the principal landowners and farmers in the neighbourhood. These threats were heeded; local farmers kept a strict watch both day and night.³⁰ A degree of caution is needed though. Magistrates were often keen to shift the blame of rebellion away from their local charges, instead blaming itinerant figures hell-bent on revolution. When in late October several threshing machines were destroyed in Bokesbourne, on the edge of the Elham Valley, George Gipps, a yeoman of considerable local clout, supposed the culprits 'not to have come from Elham... but we must unfortunately conclude, that such persons are to be found in most places', but was vehement in his belief that Bokesbourne labourers were not involved.³¹

Far more important than the shadowy figures from London in the spread of 'Swing' were motivated local activists. Within the Elham gang Martin Carvill, and other male members of his family, were key provocateurs. Carvill, in tandem with two labourers from Brabourne, on the morning of the day previous to the destruction of machines at Barham and Womenswold approached John Jefferey, a labourer from Lyminge, to go to destroy the machine at Brabourne. Carvill also went to Elmstead to incite the labourers there, and was actively involved in the destruction of the machines at Barham-Womenswold on the 20th, joined by his brother William, and at Brabourne on the 22nd. The movements of Carvill alone (the distance between Brabourne and Barham is over ten miles) would have both spread news rapidly and given the impression to local labourers that machines were being destroyed *everywhere*, and as such, that these acts of destruction were, within the frame of

³⁰ *Brighton Herald*, 16 October, copying a report from the *Morning Herald*, n.d. (but early-mid October); Glover and Hart, Clerks to the Reigate Bench, to Peel, 19 October 1830, PRO HO 52/10, ff.162-3.

³¹ G. Gipps, Howletts, to Knatchbull, 24 October, CKS U951 C177/36. The most extraordinary assertion that incendiary fires were not the work of local labourers came from Battle, where despite fire after fire in early November even the victims were 'convinced' the fires were the work of 'a very different class': James Quaife, Hackney Coach Office, Essex, to Peel, 8 November 1830, PRO HO 52/10, ff. 359-60.

popular conceptions, a perfectly legitimate activity. Henry Read, one of the ringleaders of the Elham gang, went even further, proclaiming 'we shall destroy any machine about here – the law provided to break them all'. The importance of the Carvill family is intensified yet further by Price's fire on 5 October, for which Martin's brother John was suspected.³² At exactly the same time as Price's fire was first noticed, a fire also started on a wheat stack of Michael Becker, the Ash overseer, who a fortnight had earlier received a threatening letter. The fire caused £3,000 damage and destroyed a threshing machine. The timing was no coincidence; at the same time as the commencement of the fires, rockets were fired in a line between Ash and Lyminge, a distance of 14 miles and obscured by the North Downs. That members of the Elham gang were in communication with men from Ash is not surprising, for Barham lay directly midway between Ash and Lyminge. Ash was also located in the important flat coastal plain, which included the whole of the Isle of Thanet, to which labourers, including Ingram Swaine of Elham, descended to get work in the early harvest. Links, whether fostered through seasonal work gangs, smuggling gangs (both Ash and Elham were notorious centres) or kinship networks, existed and were utilised.³³

Until the night before the trial of the Elham men East Kent remained quiet, other than for the aforementioned letters and machine breaking at Dover and a solitary case of arson at Dumpton on 10 October.³⁴ However 5 October marked a renewal of the campaign of arson around the Kent-Surrey border. At 2am the barns on Mr. Ford's farm at Oxted, Surrey, were discovered to be on fire. A crowd of people soon congregated in the yard, but instead of helping to extinguish the fire they actively stopped others from assisting, and when Ford's threshing machine caught fire they even gave three cheers. Two days later farmer Jordan suffered a similar fate at nearby Otford, his premises going up in flames as had been warned in a threatening letter he received earlier that day: the crowd again

³² Depositions of John Jefferey, n.d. (but late early October), William Fordred, 24 September, William Hughes, 25 September, and John Carvill, 6 October, CKS U951 C177/9, 11, 14 and 32; Deposition of John Jefferey, 8 October 1830, CKS Q/SBe 120/15. Such activity meant that news of events within the vicinity could spread rapidly. That men from the vicinity of Barham had joined the Elham gang no doubt provided a strong example to later machine breaking in Bekesbourne and Bishopsbourne, indeed it is quite likely that men from those parishes were in the party that broke the machines at Barham, and that Barham labourers were active in the destruction of machines at Bekesbourne and Bishopsbourne. That the area in which the Wingham gang later operated also bordered onto these parishes provides the strong probability of some quite tantalising links.

³³ *Kent Herald*, 7 October; *Kentish Gazette*, 8 October; *Maidstone Journal*, 12 October. The previous winter John Fordred, a poor married shepherd with five children dwelling at Margate but belonging to Ash and therefore entitled to relief, could find no work, Becker allowed him 9/- a week but on the condition that he had to go to Ash, at a distance of thirteen miles, every Thursday to receive the money. Becker then said he must come to Ash everyday except Sunday to receive 1/6. He did so for about nine weeks but it materially affected his heath had to give up and forced to seek work nearer at lower pay 'so as to be almost starving'. According to John Boys there were many other cases where Becker had 'greatly provoked the vengeance of the poor': John Boys, Margate, to Peel, 17 October, PRO HO 52/8, ff.209-210. For Swaine see: Confession of Jack Spicer, labourer, n.d. (but late September 1830), CKS U951 C177/12.

³⁴ *Kentish Gazette*, 12 October 1830.

hindered the efforts of the firemen by cutting the pipes of attendant fire engines. The same night Mr. Thompson, at Hendon Farm near Sevenoaks, fell victim to the wrath of incendiaries for the ninth time since August.³⁵ Over the next ten days the pressure was sustained through a further resort to arson (between Wrotham and Farningham on the 8th, at Hadlow on the 11th, and at Hartfield on the 17th) and incendiary letters ('several' received before the 13th threatening to set Sevenoaks on fire: one gentleman at Westerham continued to receive letters threatening to burn his premises if he did not leave, and one at Wrotham before the 18th). Moreover, reports stated that at East Grinstead arson and machine breaking had been resorted to in the period before the 21st.³⁶

The fortnight after Price's and Becker's fires, however, was most striking in that machine breaking and the sending of threatening letters occurred for the first time (that year) outside of East Kent and the Kent-Sussex-Surrey border. On 12 October William Chapman of Lenham had several of his 'agricultural implements' sawed to pieces as well as having 'considerable damage' done to 'another article used in farming operations'; a punishment for making negative remarks about the Elham machine breakers. This is important as it helps to establish the importance of the activities of the Elham gang in motivating not only those in the immediate vicinity but also those at a considerable distance. 'Swing' was now, defiantly, a movement. However, it was at Maidstone, nine miles to the north-east, that 'Swing' became manifest in its most complex form yet. The aforementioned meeting on 1 October held to congratulate the French 'on their Revolution' also drew the Mayor to make reference to the events at either end of the county, claiming that 'the fires and the machine breaking' were the result of grievances that would only be alleviated by a reform of parliament. Within a fortnight the Mayor had given permission for a further meeting to be held, this time, as the correspondent to the Home Office put it, 'to harangue the working classes'. This meeting reinforced the sentiments of a notorious handbill, appropriately entitled 'Nice Pickings', detailing the pensions and sinecures of many of the aristocracy and senior figures in the church, which had been industriously circulated in both West Kent and the Weald. The meeting was chaired by a certain Charles Waite, a 'person of no religion' who had sold his commission in the army as Adjudicant

³⁵ *County Chronicle*, 12 October; *Maidstone Journal*, 19 October; *Times*, 15 October 1830. Also see chapter 2.

³⁶ *Kentish Gazette*, 19 October; *Brighton Gazette*, 14 October (a person had 'been heard' to threaten Mr. Martin at Hadlow on the previous Sunday. The fire was also supposed to be caused by a non-parishioner: Mr. Moneypenny, JP, to Peel, 15 October, PRO HO 52/8, ff.338-9); *Sussex Advertiser*, 22 November (Camden had also informed Peel in October of a fire at Hartfield: Camden, Canterbury, to Peel, 22 October; PRO HO 52/8, ff.216-8). For threatening letters see: *Maidstone Journal*, 19 October; *Kentish Gazette*, 19 October; *Kent Herald*, 21 October. For East Grinstead see: *Brighton Gazette*, 21 October 1830. The East Grinstead reports may be incorrect though. The fires alluded to may have those at neighbouring Hartfield and even nearby Oxted, that a threshing

Brevet Major for 'several thousand pounds' to devote himself to radical politics. On the 14th William Cobbett started his south-eastern lecture tour at Maidstone, charging only 3d. so as 'that the WORKING PEOPLE may not be shut out'. Within the next four days at least three threatening letters were received in the vicinity of Maidstone; one received at Maidstone threatened to set the town on fire, whereas two others were sent to 'Gentlemen' and threatened to set their out-buildings alight if they did not employ the parish poor. That all three were signed 'Swing' provided further evidence that the activities of the men from Elham had not gone unnoticed in radical Maidstone.³⁷

IV

The night before the Canterbury trial, the first 'Swing' incidents in the vicinity of Sittingbourne occurred. Both Mr. Harnett at Newington-next-Sittingbourne and overseer Knight at Borden had their farms set on fire, Knight's damage was estimated to be in excess of £2,000. The sense of paranoia was fuelled yet further by reports in the Maidstone press that shortly before the fire an elderly women living in a nearby cottage heard a carriage pass-by and an 'incriminating conversation'. A few days later a piece of chilling graffiti was scrawled on a nearby wall: 'Down with machines. Death to informers'.³⁸

On the night following the trial, Kent erupted. Mr. Quested, the parish surveyor and a substantial farmer at Ash, had a gratten stack set alight; the following night he was again visited, this time by a 'gang of men' who broke open the stable door and turned 14-15 horses into the road. The men were however disturbed by two persons who had been placed on watch. The *Times* reported it was conjectured they were attempting to set fire to the farm buildings. Whatever their motives, their actions were an open affront to Knatchbull's assertion that the Elham men, set up as exemplars of all men of (East) Kent, saw incendiarism 'as a horror'.³⁹ Events in West Kent were more ominous, though. On the night of the trial a gang of 50 men, some armed with guns and pistols, some with blackened faces, marched from Newington to Hartlip where they destroyed a threshing machine – the first to be destroyed by force outside of East Kent. It later transpired that the gang had

machine was destroyed in the later fire may account for reports of machine breaking. It is worth reiterating though that the report did say several threshing machines had been *broken*.

³⁷ *Maidstone Gazette*, 19 October; *Maidstone Journal*, 19 October; *Kentish Gazette*, 19 and 22 October; *Kent Herald*, 7 and 21 October; Maidstone Postmaster, to Sir Francis Freeling, 14 October 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.333-4.

³⁸ Camden, 22 October, Poore, Murston, 23 October, to Peel, PRO HO 52/8, ff.216-8 and 300-1; Poore, Murston, to Knatchbull, 24 October, CKS U951 C177/35; *Maidstone Journal*, 26 October; *Kent Herald*, 28 October; *Maidstone Gazette*, 9 November 1830.

³⁹ Camden, Canterbury, 22 October, Rev. Gleig, Ash, 25 October, to Peel, PRO HO 52/8, fff.216-8 and 359-360; *Times*, 23 and 27 October; *Kentish Gazette*, 26 October; *Kent Herald*, 28 October 1830.

operated a sophisticated plan: some of the party had been drinking with the local assistant overseer and two farmers at 'one of these abominable nuisances, a new Beershop' in an attempt to way lay them until the rest of the gang had destroyed the machine. Rev. Poore, who had been present at the trial, remarked that there was a:

regular intercourse with those concerned in breaking the machines (& and I fear the Incendiaries) at the two extremities of the county, as they in this neighbourhood have been heard to say, they could obtain the assistance of one Hundred men from either or both parts whenever required...this seems such a combined plan that unless stopped something more serious must ensue.⁴⁰

At Ulcomb (between Ashford and Maidstone) not long after the parish officers had assembled for their 'usual business... a number of people' entered the room, turned off the lights, broke the tables and compelled the officers to leave without finishing the meeting. The same night a farm at Boxley, on the edge of Maidstone, was targeted by incendiaries. The events in Hartlip and Ulcomb both demonstrated a strong degree of planning, therefore it seems unlikely that either were influenced by the trial verdicts, besides news of the sentences had probably yet to reach them.⁴¹

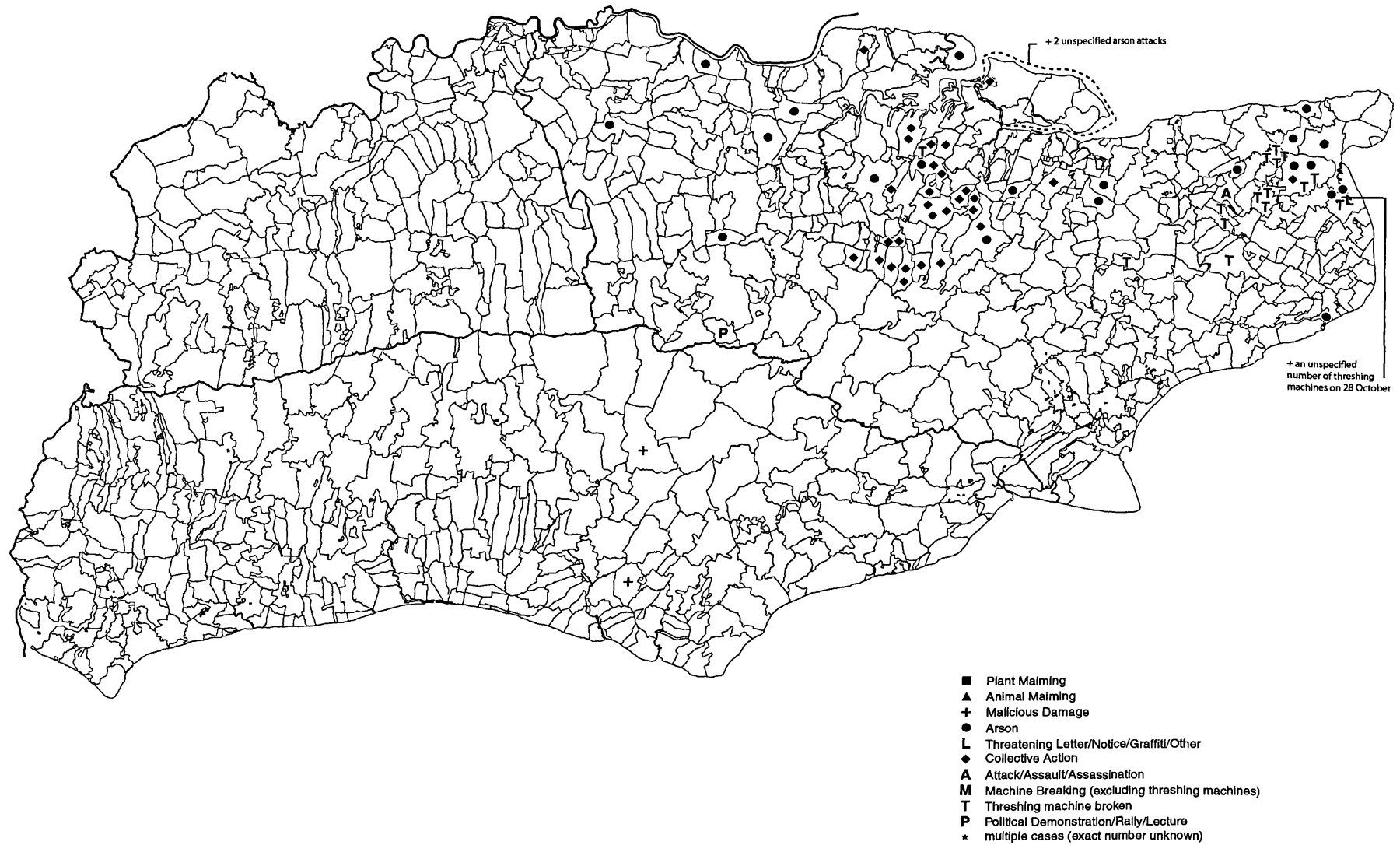
News of the trial was certainly believed to be in effect the following day, when a group of men assembled 'in the face of day' and destroyed a threshing machine at Three Colts in Sandwich before later that evening setting fire to nearby Salutation Farm, apparently in revenge for the occupier refusing to 'lay down his machine'.⁴² Meanwhile a gang of men, 'supposed not to have come from Elham', assembled in the parishes of Bekesbourne, Patixbourne and Barham and broke threshing machines on three different farms. The men were also said to have 'asked' one of the farmers to raise their daily wages to 2/6; apparently the same claim had been made directly to Knatchbull during his earlier investigations in Elham. This commonality of request suggested that such demands were the product of a considered local campaign by a people that were determined to improve their quality of life and could not care less about Knatchbull's hope 'that the kindness and moderation evinced this day [at the trial] by the magistrates would be met by a corresponding feeling among the people'. 'The disprobation of punishment is observed upon creating nightly alarm and destruction of property', claimed a Bekesbourne landowner. One of the victims of the Elham gang put it more forcefully:

⁴⁰ Rev. Poore, Murston, to Peel, 23 October, PRO HO 52/8, ff.300-1; Poore to Knatchbull, 24 October 1830, CKS U951 C177/35.

⁴¹ *Maidstone Journal*, 26 October; Mr. Sharp, Faversham, to Sir Francis Freeling, 26 October 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.361-2.

⁴² *Times*, 27 October; *Kentish Gazette*, 29 October; George Gipps, to Knatchbull, 24 October, CKS U951 C177/36; Rev. Gleig, Ash, to Peel, 25 October 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.359-360.

Map 1.3: Swing Protests, 23 October 1830 to 31 October 1830 (day before 1st collective acts in East Sussex)



The subsequent outrages, bear out [my] arguments... temporizing with anarchists seldom succeeds; as a seditious and revolutionary spirit pervades the county nothing less than the extreme rigors of the law, will preserve social order.⁴³

Moreover, Home Secretary Peel, a mere three days after the trial, in correspondence with Lord Camden, took the unusual step of castigating a judicial sentence: 'I should have thought a severe example in the case of Destruction of farming property would have had a much greater effect – than the unparalleled lenity shown to the Destroyers of Thrashing Machines.'⁴⁴

Destruction that night was not limited to East Kent. Farmer Aldridge's corn-filled barn at Shipbourne, near Sevenoaks, was also set on fire and destroyed. However, it was in the course of the next two days that West Kent truly 'ignited'. On Sunday 24 October Rev. Poore warned the Home Office that many farmers in the vicinity of Sittingbourne had been threatened that in a few days all their property would be destroyed. It was no coincidence, he claimed, that there were many strangers 'of the covert class' around.⁴⁵ The next day between 50 and 100 men assembled from the hamlets around Wormshill and Frinstead with the intention of intimidating the local farmers into their demands, threatening them 'in indirect terms' with vengeance if their terms were not met. To this end those assembled compelled all others labourers they met to join them. In the evening this party proceeded from Frinstead towards Charing Heath where another 300 men were supposed to be joining them. Elsewhere, at Sittingbourne the bricklayers as well as other journeymen and labourers struck from work for an increase in wages; whilst at nearby Newington 150-200 labourers left their work, and proceeded from farm to farm to 'enforce certain demands on their employers' before assembling with a tricolour that evening at a vestry meeting. An emissary was sent into the room to state their demands: 2/6 a day with a supplement of 1/6 a week for every child above 2 in number, and yearly rents of £3-10. The crowd were victorious. The spokesperson was 'a perfect stranger... shabbily dressed but spoke...most fluently' who had 'harranged the populace' into action. After the meeting he asked to sleep in a particular farmers' barn, which was also agreed to. The next morning, whilst breakfasting with the servants, he triumphantly and somewhat discourteously stated that 'they' had intended to burn down the farmers' house but 'as it was he should be murdered'. Even more ominously the *Rochester Gazette* reported that 'large bodies of men armed with

⁴³ George Gipps, Howletts, 24 October, CH Hallett, n.d. (but 24 October), to Knatchbull, CKS U951 C177/36 and 2; Gipps, 28 October, Sir Henry Montresor, 27 October, to Knatchbull, CKS U951 C14/5 and 4; *Times*, 25 October; *Kent Herald*, 28 October 1830.

⁴⁴ Peel, to Camden, 25 October 1830, CKS U840 C250 10/6.

⁴⁵ Camden, Wilderness, to Peel, 24 October, PRO HO 52/8, ff.231-2; *Kent Herald*, 28 October. Poore, Murston, to Knatchbull, 24 October 1830, CKS U951 C177/35.

bludgeons' had been seen during the last few nights on the road below Rainham and were occasionally going in different directions.⁴⁶

In a seemingly unrelated but parallel move, a 'mob' armed with staves gathered at Queenborough on the Isle of Sheppy to demand higher wages in their employment on the oyster grounds. The mob assaulted the foreman and threatened to destroy his house, and set 'the civil authority... at nought'. The Mayor hastily swore in 22 special constables who speedily disarmed the mob, however they still refused to disperse. To counter this defiance the Riot Act was read, enraging the crowd who seized the Mayor and held him hostage in the Town Hall, thereby preventing him calling for the military. The civil authorities were essentially set at nought and had little option but to cave in to the mob's demands.⁴⁷

The following morning a large number of people from Frinstead and Wormshill again gathered and set off towards Lenham, where they had planned to meet the men from that parish. Lord Winchelsea, passing through Lenham on his way to London, unintentionally stumbled upon the Lenham contingent: they were 150 labourers from adjoining parishes armed with saws, axes and bludgeons who had met with the purpose to destroy the threshing machines in the area, and were later to be joined, so they claimed, by 300-400 more men at Watlingtonbury. Winchelsea successfully prevailed upon them to disperse, then as an emergency precaution attempted to swear in some special constables from Lenham. Many, however, were unwilling to be sworn. It later transpired that between 8 and 9am about 300 men had assembled in Lenham and marched about for between three and four hours carrying a banner bearing the inscription 'Starving at 1s. 6d. a week' and demanding money or food. After this intimidating parade the party advanced towards Hollingbourne where they met Winchelsea. Also that evening three different parties were supposed to be meeting at a Faversham Beershop, one of which was probably the '50 desperadoes' who had earlier surrounded Mr. Benstead's barn at Ospringe and compelled his labourers, then busy threshing, to join them 'on a machine breaking episode'.⁴⁸

If the party at Ospringe were desperadoes, then the activities of the roaming parties over the next four days were enough to earn them the sobriquet of revolutionaries. Apparently at the fore of one of these parties was Robert Price, a highly politicised 48 year-old shoemaker. 'On or about' 25 October Price was travelling between Newington and

⁴⁶ Poore, Murston, to Peel, 25 October, Sharp, Faversham, to Freeling, 26 October, PRO HO 52/8, ff.365-6 and 361-2; Poore, to Knatchbull, 26 October, CKS U951 C14/7; *Rochester Gazette*, 26 October; *Kent Herald*, 28 October 1830.

⁴⁷ Poore, Murston, to Peel, 25 October, PRO HO 52/8, ff.365-6; Poore, to Knatchbull, 26 October 1830, CKS U951 C14/7.

⁴⁸ Poore, Murston, to Knatchbull, 26 October, CKS U951 C14/7; Camden, to Peel, 26 October, enclosing Mr. Scudamore, Wrotham Heath, 26 October, PRO HO 52/8, ff.228-30; *Kentish Gazette*, 29 October 1830.

Chatham: upon feeling fatigued he stopped to take refreshment at a Newington public house. Here Price claimed he was compelled to join a party who were to declare their grievances and request an addition to their wages; he only joined the men on the stipulation that they must strictly adhere 'to what I should require of them which was to do no injury to anyone', i.e. that he lead them. 'In their company' Price stayed until he was taken into custody on 16 November, after taking part in a series of 'risings' in an extensive area stretching from Sittingbourne to Yalding.

On the morning of 27 October, the day of the Maidstone Michaelmas fair, Price along with a party of 'one or two and twenty' Hucking and Stockbury men equipped with sticks as well as one black and one tricolor flag and a horn, assembled at the Harrow pub in Debtling. From the pub the party observed Mrs. Stacey pass by in the direction of Stockbury. The party left the pub and followed her, returning 20 minutes later to order more beer and for Price to address them. Farmer Green overheard the speech:

The Gentlemen must take down their equipages, leave off their dandy habits and there must be an alteration altogether. More was said but I do not recollect what.

The party then asked Green for 'something'. He gave them half a gallon of beer which they swiftly drunk before departing for Stacey's house. Mrs. Stacey asked the party what they doing. Price answered that they had 'come to drink your health having righted the Poor of this parish... [that they were] going round to the different houses to get something to drink and tomorrow all are going to work on two shillings and six pence a day'. Stacey offered them 2/6 but Price scoffed, stating that 'all the farmers have given us as much and we expected this being the only gentleman's house at least a sovereign'. Stacey then offered three shillings and some bread and as much table beer as they wanted. Still not satisfied, Price launched into a tirade about the state of the poor, to which Stacey suggested they wait to the new Parliament to see what the King did, in belief that he was going to 'take off five millions in taxes'. Price exploded: 'King, we have no King... Five millions of heads will be taken off before that is done', even lending his support to the 'burnings' as:

necessary to bring people to their senses, it is your dandy Houses and your dandy habits and your sinecure places that have brought the Country to this state... you are all too high and must come down from the Head. If you go to Church you only go to look at the... fashions... Now we have righted this Parish we are going thro' every other Village and Parish to do the same thing.

To which another member of the party added, 'it is only now for the farmers to rise against their landlords'. Price triumphantly offered the chilling parting shot: 'We have five thousand ready to join you. There will be no gaols, no tread wheels much longer'.⁴⁹

The gang left and in an act of sheer bravado ordered beer and refreshments in Mr. Stacey's name at the nearby Squirrels pub. That afternoon, their numbers swollen to 'about 200', they proceeded to Hartlip 'to make further contribution[s] and insist on an Increase of Wages' and constant employment for all. From there the plan was to march to Rainham to effect the same, as some of those present at Hartlip had come from Rainham. However Mr. Bland, a local magistrate, upon hearing of their activities informed Rev. Poore, who, alarmed that the men were to about to enter his division, ordered Bland to speedily assemble a civil force to assist Poore's supplementary military force. The crowd made light work of the civil power but upon the arrival of the military speedily retreated in the direction of Stockbury.⁵⁰

The following morning (28 October) a 'mob of 70 – 100, several with sticks or hedge stakes', gathered at Hollingbourne and proceeded to march around the parish calling on the different farmers to demand 2/6 a day, or 2/- for single men, and victuals. Their leader claimed the farmers could afford to pay higher wages as they had no need to pay their rents, taxes and tithes for the men would 'protect' them. However, this collusion would only go so far. In conversing with one 'gentleman', who they observed was 'a damned bad one', they threatened that if higher wages were not paid at the end of the week not only were there 'enough of them to throw all you Gentlemen into the River' but also 'they would come and take a sack of flour from [your] Barnyard's and Mill and sheep and bullocks from anybody else'.⁵¹

On Friday 29th at 9am about 100 men again at Hollingbourne and marched around the surrounding parishes demanding money and victuals, compelling other labourers to join them on their way. Later that afternoon they coalesced with another group lead by another radical Maidstone shoemaker, John Adams. This 'super-group' first visited Rev. Sir John Filmer at East Sutton, where Adams stated 'he hoped the Gentlemen would go hand in hand with the labouring classes to get the expenses of Government reduced', before descending

⁴⁹ Defence of Robert Price, Despositions of Daniel Green, farmer, and Charlotte Stacey, wife of Courtney Stacey, all 19 November, Q/SBw/124/7,8 and 9; Poore, Murston, to Knatchbull, 29 October, CKS U951 C14/6. A handbill titled 'Nice Pickings' detailing the emoluments of various aristocrats and bishops had been industriously circulated in the Weald during late October: *Maidstone Journal*, 26 October 1830.

⁵⁰ Poore, Murston, to Knatchbull, n.d. (but 28 October), CKS U951 C14/8; Poore, to Peel, 29 October 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.367-8.

⁵¹ Prosecution Brief prepared by the Treasury Solicitor in the case of the King vs. Edward Chapman, Mathew Waltz Walker, and William Robinson, PRO TS 11/943. The gang spent the day levying 'a sort of voluntary contribution from the farmers' which they again spent at various public houses: *Maidstone Journal*, 2 November 1830.

upon Rev. Gambier at Langley, where Adams launched into another political speech, attacking sinecures, calling for parliamentary reform, and threatening that if they were not relieved they would 'bedew the Country with Blood and pull down the House[s of Parliament] which had thoroughly got the dry rot and build up the new with honest materials'. Gambier gave Adams a sovereign, but only 'in fear'. The gang, now 200-300 strong, continued their march to Sutton Town where their 'object it seems was merely to get refreshment at the various public houses', for they were 'well conducted and peaceable'. From here they were dismissed by the leader of the Hollingbourne contingent, who, speaking in a 'sensible manner', warned them not to do any mischief on their journey home before imploring them to meet at Sutton in the morning.⁵² However, their tacit support for incendiarism was surely in some part responsible for the three local incendiary fires that occurred within five days. After the first of these fires, on Mr. Dawson's Stockbury farm, not only did the labourers refuse to help extinguish the flames, but later paraded through the village with a black flag. Adding to the horror, several Gentlemen in the vicinity of Maidstone received threatening letters, one of which was gruesomely sealed with blood. Overt activism went hand in hand with covert terror(ism).⁵³

300-400 men did meet again the following morning (30 October) at Sutton, coinciding with a meeting of the magistrates at Maidstone called to swear in special constables, where the 'great majority' of those called refused to take the oath. During the meeting news reached the magistrates that an assemblage had occurred at Sutton from where the men had proceeded to take refreshments at Linton Place, thereby passing through Chart Sutton and Boughton Monchelsea en route. The Mayor, several magistrates, and a small military detachment immediately advanced towards Linton, finding the men, armed with short thick sticks, ensconced in the quarries at Boughton Monchelsea, having already visited the estates of Marquis Cornwallis and Mr. Ryder. Despite Adams attempting to speak on behalf of the men, the Riot Act was read, infuriating Adams who accused the Government of being 'privy to the outrages... as an excuse for sending soldiers to spill the blood of these half-starved men'. On this, Adams and two others (Pitman, a fellow

⁵² *Maidstone Journal*, 2 November; *Hastings & Cinque Ports Iris*, 6 November 1830; Prosecution brief prepared by the Treasury Solicitor in the case of the King vs. John Adams, PRO TS 11/1071, 5035.

⁵³ 1st fire: Stockbury, 24 October (Poore, Murston, to Peel, 25 October, PRO HO 52/8, ff.356-6; *Maidstone Journal*, 26 October; *Kentish Gazette*, 29 October), 2nd: Lenham, 28 October (Sharp, Faversham, to Freeling, 28 and 31 October, Poore, Murston, to Peel, 29 October, PRO HO 52/8, ff. 379, 22-3 and 367-8), 3rd: Doddington, 29 October (Sharp, Faversham, to Freeling, 31 October, PRO HO 52/8, ff.22-3). For threatening letters see: *Maidstone Journal*, 26 October 1830. Instructively whilst in dialogue with one farmer Edward Chapman, one of the 'principal spokesmen', alluded to the incendiary fires: 'what a sad thing it would be if these stacks should be burnt down'. Instructively whilst in dialogue with one farmer he alluded to the incendiary fires: 'what a sad thing it would be if these stacks should be burnt down': see Prosecution Brief prepared by the Treasury

Maidstone shoemaker, and Holloway, a Southwark tailor) were seized. Rev. Poore understood that '300' of the men had come from parishes in the vicinity of Lenham, and a similar number from the 'Tunbridge side', all of whom had met first at Langley and were to meet another 1,000 men from the Weald. Lieutenant Colonel Middleton, who commanded the military force, starkly warned Peel that if such mobs were tolerated they would accumulate with other 'disaffected and profligate scum of society'.⁵⁴

V

Meanwhile in East Kent the destruction of threshing machines carried on apace. On 25 October a gang of labourers from Ash engaged in one of Swing's most destructive machine breaking episodes. Their efforts were part of a plan that had been afoot since at least late September. Timothy Willocks, the labourer charged with Becker's fire (5 October), had in the week previous to the fire been asked to go machine breaking. Willocks refused on the basis that it was 'damn'd nonsense going out in large parties'. On the night after Becker's fire Willocks went with William Clarke, a Rochester Wine merchant, to a nearby pub, and, already much in liquor, began a tirade against the state of the poor man in England, stating that he rented a cottage but could not afford to pay the rent and as such everyday expected it to be seized back. This made him defiant: 'he would as soon be hung as go to the Workhouse', besides he believed 'the poor man's turn must come and will come along very soon'. Willocks equated the state of the poor in England to that of the poor in France before the recent revolution, asking Clarke if he knew what the poor had been doing there, because before long England would soon come to the same state. Whilst at the pub, a 'short elderly man...dressed as a labourer' came in, whom the bar girl called Captain. The old man took Willocks aside to admonish him for trusting a stranger: 'you damn'd fool how do you know who you are talking to. You had better go home and go to bed'. This man was Edward Revell, an ageing thatcher; Captain was 'a nickname he has had for years'.⁵⁵

On the morning of Monday 25 October, the day after a handbill of a 'mischievous spirit' had been distributed around Ash, between seven and eight o'clock 20 men gathered with the intention of visiting the different farmers to demand they 'put their machines

Solicitor in the case of the King vs. Edward Chapman, Mathew Waltz Walker, and William Robinson, PRO TS 11/943.

⁵⁴ Prosecution brief prepared by the Treasury Solicitor in the case of the King vs. John Adams, PRO TS 11/1071, 5035; Poore, Murston, to Knatchbull, 29/30 October, CKS U951 C14/6; Maidstone Bench, 30 October, Lieut. Col. Charles Middleton, Cavalry Depot, Maidstone, 31 October, to Peel, PRO HO 52/8, ff.28-9 and 25-6; *Maidstone Journal*, 2 November; *Kent Herald*, 4 November; *Hastings & Cinque Ports Iris*, 6 November 1830.

⁵⁵ 'Prosecution Brief' prepared by the Treasury Solicitor against Timothy Willocks (but not brought to trial), PRO TS 11/943.

down' or 'pay more money for labour', whilst compelling other labourers, especially those working threshing machines, to join them. One of the farms was that of George Quested, the Ash surveyor, a victim of an earlier incendiary fire. Quested walked up the men, who were armed with axes, pickaxes, sledgehammers and saws, and remonstrated with them on their going about in an armed gang. They sarcastically responded that 'they could not sleep quietly in their beds for fear of the fires' and as such 'were going to break all the threshing machines...then there would be no more fires'. Quested pleaded that, if a want of employment had made them assemble, he would employ them all from 1 November to 1 March at 2/6 a day, 'the same as his other men had', an offer that was ignored. The men then departed taking Quested's threshers with them and proceeded to take an early morning drink at a nearby pub where they determined to break Richard Southee's threshing machine on his farm at Westmarsh. However, on their journey they met Rev. Gleig who persuaded them that, as Southee was not at home, they better not break his machine. They agreed and instead went to the Lion pub in Ash Street, meeting James Horton and Peter Cull on the way.⁵⁶

In conversation, Horton and Cull admitted they had been at the fire at Sandwich the previous day and were part of the party that broke the machine, recounting 'what fun they had breaking them'. This was enough it seems to persuade the party to redouble their efforts and return to Southee's farm, although some of them had to be literally dragged along. Over the course of the afternoon and evening the party, led by Horton resplendent in his distinctive white hat, destroyed nine different threshing machines on nine different farms covering an extensive area between Wingham and Ash.⁵⁷ The destruction of James Dowker's machine at Stourmouth was typical. After hearing a 'hallowing', Dowker saw the party at a little distance breaking Mr. Fox's machine. He therefore ordered his men to go and unlock the barn in which his machine was in order 'to prevent as much mischief as he could for he had no strength to oppose them'. When asked why they were breaking the machine, one of the party simply responded 'they were come to do this to prevent the famine'. After destroying the machine some of the party, getting carried away, started attacking some of the boards in the barn, but were reprimanded by Horton who told them to 'back off for they had done with the Machine'. The party reassembled in the farmyard and

⁵⁶ John Plumtree and Mr. Hammond, St. Albans Court, Fredville, Wingham, Rev. Gleig, Ash, both 25 October, to Peel, PRO HO 52/8, ff.363-4 and 359-60; Depositions of John Sladden, labourer, 26 October, William Euden, a.k.a. Kingsfold, labourer, 19 November, George Quested, surveyor, 17 November 1830, CKS Q/SBe 121/3a, 9 and 8.

⁵⁷ Deposition of William Euden, 19 November, George Curteis, to Knatchbull, n.d. (but between 26 October and 20 November), Various Depositions, 26 October to 20 November, CKS Q/SBe 121/9, 19 and 1-13; *Kentish Gazette*, 29 October 1830. The threshing machines (in order of destruction) belonged to Messrs. Southee (Goldstone), Petley (Oversland), Fox (Stourmouth), Dowker (Stourmouth), Addley (Stourmouth), Culmer (Stourmouth), Dadd (Wingham), Matson (Wingham) and Sweetlove (Wingham): same sources.

gave three cheers before moving on to destroy farmer Addley's machine. The gang did not stay at large for long. Later that night the magistrates, assisted by a troop of soldiers, took seven men into custody and a further two the following morning. Notwithstanding this hard-line approach, the 'labouring men' defiantly struck from work at Ash that morning, determined that married men should receive at least half a crown for a days labour and threatening that if this was not granted they would break the farmers' ploughs 'leaving them no alternative but the spade'.⁵⁸

The systematic and fierce operations of the Ash gang, despite obviously being effective, were not replicated elsewhere in East Kent until late November. Whilst no large scale and sustained destruction of machinery took place in the intervening period, there were isolated examples of machine breaking. The Mayor of Sandwich reported to Peel that on 28 October threshing machines had been destroyed by 'tumultuous assemblages'. That night a Sandwich farmer became a victim of an incendiary fire, whilst 'threats of destruction' were made in Sandwich the next day.⁵⁹ Also on the 28th farmer Noges at Crundale – in an area thus far apparently unaffected by Swing – had his threshing machine destroyed; and on 2 November three threshing machines were destroyed on three different farms on the edge of Dover, the residual work of the Elham gang. On 30 October a group of soldiers were passing between Ickham and Littlebourne when they were attacked by a party of labourers, one of whom threw a large stone at a soldier, severely injuring him.⁶⁰ However, between late October and early November, Swing in East Kent was most obviously manifested through a resort to arson (see appendix 1.2), with the fires at Selling and Chartham causing particular alarm as the assembled labourers refused to help extinguish the flames. Alarm was also generated at Monkton where a few days after an incendiary fire several unexploded rockets were discovered.⁶¹

The area between Canterbury and Faversham was not only impacted upon by frequent incendiary fires but also the spill-over effects of the wage movements to the West of Faversham. Assemblages demanding higher wages were reported at Faversham and Boughton. A Faversham farmer noted of the dozen labourers that entered his yard:

⁵⁸ Depositions of James Dowker, farmer, 26 October and 19 November, James Petty, labourer, John Spain, labourer, and William Euden, all 19 November, CKS Q/SBe 121/1, 12a-c and 9. Poore, Murston, to Knatchbull, 26 October, CKS U951 C14/7; *Maidstone Journal*, 2 November 1830.

⁵⁹ David Taylor, Mayor of Sandwich, to Peel, 29 October 1830, PRO HO 52/8, f.142.

⁶⁰ Sharp, Faversham, to Freeling, 31 October, PRO HO 52/8, ff.22-3; *Kentish Gazette*, 5 November; *Times*, 2 November 1830.

⁶¹ Sharp, Faversham, to Freeling, 26 October (8:30pm), PRO HO 52/8, ff.361-2; *Times*, 30 October; *Kentish Gazette*, 29 October and 5 November 1830.

It was their intention to go to the different farmers... with a view to get their wages raised to 2s. 6d. a day which, I believe they accomplished. When they parted last night at Boughton Street, it was supposed they amounted to 400 men. They are going round the parishes in the neighbourhood tomorrow, and intend meeting the farmers at a vestry to be held at the church in the afternoon... They are very quiet... They say the next thing they intend doing is to go to the landlords and make them lower their rents.

A similar meeting, lead by the aforementioned Robert Price, also took place at East Malling on 3 November, four miles due west of Maidstone - an area that had, until the previous day when Price started to recruit local labourers, been free of overt activity. Two days later a group of labourers visited the farm of R. Tassell Esq. with the intention of destroying his threshing machine, but were somehow persuaded not to.⁶²

During the last week of October and the first few days of November, outside East Kent and the agitated area between Sittingbourne, Maidstone and Tonbridge, arson and threatening letters were Swing's instruments of terror, with the area between Maidstone, Rochester, and Dartford particularly affected. The fire on the Earl of Darnley premises at Cobham on the 24th, which followed a series of rockets being fired in the vicinity, prompted local farmers to lay aside their machines.⁶³ Despite this, farms at Wrotham, Greenhithe, Meopham and Wouldham fell prey to incendiaries, and two Northfleet farmers and several other hop growers in the area received letters threatening destruction of their property, prompting a mass sending of hops to the London markets.⁶⁴ During the same period two farmers on the Isle of Sheppey, one at Orpington and one on the Isle of Grain (where labourers at Cooling struck from work on the 30th) became the latest victims of incendiarism. By early November Swing, though, was most dramatically manifested in the Kent and Sussex Weald.⁶⁵

As Hobsbawm and Rudé suggested, the 'emphasis' was now on the reduction of rents, tithes, and taxes rather than the use of threshing machines. Rent however was not 'a new issue'; it had been a central demand of the gangs who besieged the Newington-next-Sittingbourne vestry on 25 October and Stockbury two days later. Moreover, the Ash radical accused of Becker's fire had also complained about prohibitive cottage rents. Although farm and cottage rents operated under different dynamics, the implications of

⁶² *Times*, 4 November; *Kentish Gazette*, 5 November 1830. Deposition of Robert Tassel, merchant and papermaker, 19 November, Gaol Calendar, West Kent Epiphany Quarter Sessions 1831, CKS Q/SBw 124 6 and 15; *Maidstone Gazette*, 9 November 1830.

⁶³ See Appendix 1.2. W. Lushington, WLCMO, to Arbuthknot, 26 October, PRO HO 52/8, ff.384-5; *Maidstone Journal*, 26 October; *Rochester Gazette*, 26 October; *Kent Herald*, 28 October 1830.

⁶⁴ *Hastings & Cinque Ports Iris*, 6 November; *Maidstone Journal*, 2 November; *Kent Herald*, 4 November; *Rochester Gazette*, 2 November; W. Lushington, WLCMO, to Arbuthknot, 26 October 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.384-5.

getting both lowered were well understood.⁶⁶ Rents, tithes and taxes were probably issues amongst certain Swing activists everywhere: the Elham Gang had stated to the Earl of Winchelsea that 'next year we will have a turn with the Parsons, and the third, we will make war upon the Statesmen', clear references to tithes and taxes – not surprising coming from a gang encouraged by small farmers.⁶⁷ In the Weald though farm rents were targeted so that farmers could afford to increase labourers' wages.

VI

The movement in the Weald started separately in three different places more or less simultaneously. The mobilisations around Sutton and Hollingbourne in late October spread, after several days rest, further south to Marden, Staplehurst and Frittenden, where a farmer also received a threatening letter 'couched in the most horrible language'. On 2 and 3 November an assemblage of labourers, again led by Price, called on farmers and others to give money. The party reassembled, at Cranbrook, on the following day to lobby the monthly meeting of the magistrates, held at the George Inn. After walking in an orderly body through the main street soliciting the inhabitants for assistance, several of the party went to the George. The magistrates, after listening to their complaints, promised to use their influence to obtain work for those out of employ at two shillings a day.⁶⁸

The other two parallel risings occurred at Battle and Brede, both of which were rooted in late October agitation, which, although inspired by events in Kent, was the product of indigenous activism. On the night of Saturday 30 October between eighteen and nineteen Brede parishioners, 'principally smugglers', according to local magistrate George Courthope, held a 'meeting of the poor', but adjourned without taking any decisions to the following Thursday, when about 50 people met at Thomas Noakes' house. However, they

could not very well agree about carrying Mr. Abell away the next day, some wanted to do it and some didn't. I think perhaps there might be about 20 of us stop'd and some of them what went away promised to meet at Mr. Abell's house the next morning at seven o'clock. Then they men what stopped thought perhaps they men what went away would not come so they concluded that they would go round in the morning and raise them all and so they did and met down at Mr. Abell's house.

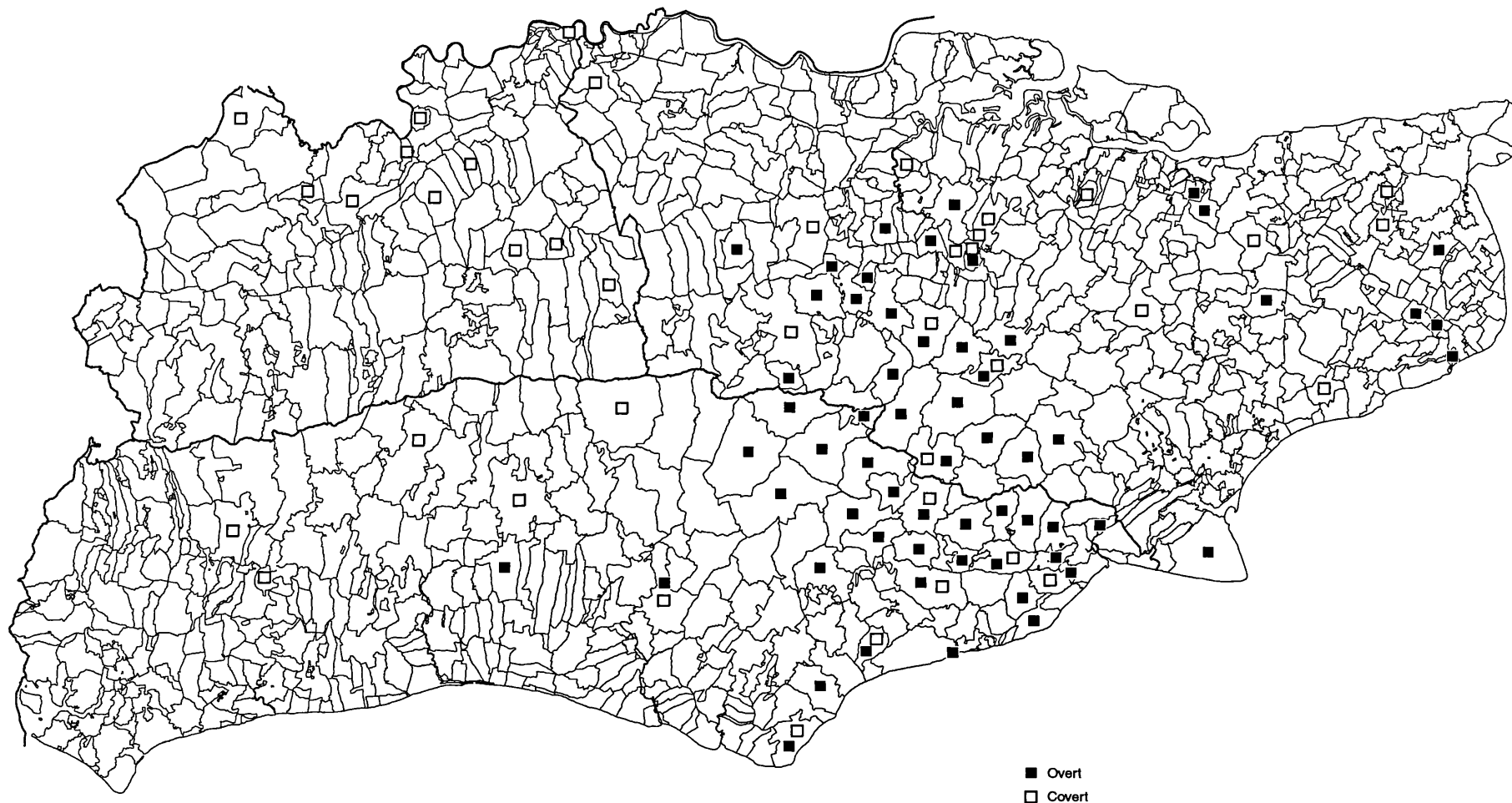
⁶⁵ *Kent Herald*, 28 October; *Maidstone Journal*, 2 November; *Rochester Gazette*, 2 November 1830.

⁶⁶ Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p.104; Poore, Murston, to Knatchbull, 26 October, CKS U951 C14/7; Deposition of Charlotte Stacey, 19 November, Q/SBw/124/9; Examination of William Henry Clarke, wine merchant, 8 October 1830, PRO TS 11/943.

⁶⁷ *Maidstone Journal*, 12 October 1830.

⁶⁸ *Maidstone Journal*, 9 November 1830.

Map 1.4: Swing Protests, 1 November 1830 to 12 November 1830 (day before 1st collective acts in West Sussex)



The crowd, initially put by Abell at 30, soon grew to 'at least one hundred and fifty including several women and boys and girls'. Whilst at Abell's house the party decided to call the gentlemen in the parish to meet them at the Red Lion, where some of the party 'made our price about what they were going to give us a day' before stating that they were going to remove Abell from the parish. The farmers agreed to both plans. On leaving the pub they went to the workhouse and symbolically got the much-hated cart, which Abell had constructed especially 'for the men to draw on the road'. Meanwhile those still at Abell's were increasingly menacing: invading his garden and threatening that unless his door was opened they would force it. Here, unsurprisingly, the stories of Abell and his assailants differ. Abell claimed he was forced, through fear, to both unlock the door and 'resign himself to the persons so assembled, having been previously told that if he would deliver himself up they would not molest him and only take him away from the parish', upon which he was forced to get into the cart. Joseph Bryant, however, claimed that 'the Farmers went in and persuaded Mr. Abell to come out and then he came out with them and got up into the cart himself'. The cart was definitely pulled to Vinehall, flanked and followed by the crowd, some of whom were marching 'with their Bats on their shoulders as if they were Guns', whilst others wore celebratory ribbons in their hats.

On their return to Brede, the party already in jubilant spirits, met farmer Coleman of Broad Oak, who 'gave every one...half a pint of Beer' because he 'never was better pleased in his life than with the day's work'. Mr. Reed of Brede High also gave them a barrel of ale 'because we [the poor] had done such a great thing in the Parish as to carry that Man away'. The poor victoriously stated to the farmers that 'we would always assist them as far as laid in our power'. This atmosphere of mutual support grew over the following days, with farmer Bourne regretting that 'he wished we had made the prices seven years ago instead of going on as we had done'. Some doubt must be cast on the solidarity between the farmers and the labourers, however, for on the night of the 5th a Brede farmer had his premises set ablaze.⁶⁹

The circumstances at Battle were slightly different. On 16 October Cobbett gave what would become a notorious lecture. This gave courage to the Battle poor, who at the beginning of November went on strike, demanding that all men should be paid at least 12/- a week, threatening that if this was not agreed to they would take the money themselves. On hearing this threat, the constable took one of the ringleaders. The crowd, 200 strong and armed with clubs, in defiance accompanied the constable to the acting magistrate, Sir

⁶⁹ G. Courthope, Whiligh, to Phillips, 6 November (twice), second enclosing deposition of Thomas Arcoll, Assistant Overseer and Governor of the Poorhouse, Brede, 6 November, Sir Godfrey Webster, Battle, to Peel, 20 November, enclosing examination of Joseph Bryant, labourer, 19 November, PRO HO 52/10, ff.369-70, 371-4 and 422-3 & 428. *Brighton Herald*, 6 November; *Brighton Gazette*, 11 November 1830.

Godfrey Webster, with the intention of rescuing their comrade. The archive, however, does not record his fate. A few days later, overseer Emary and assistant overseer Lainer received letters threatening that, if the labourers' demands were not made good, their premises would be fired. Lainer's letter was signed 'Swing', however the archive does not record if Emary's was similarly signed. On the night of 3 November Emary's farm was set on fire. Magistrate Ticknoll was adamant that it was motivated by revenge 'for some act... in his official capacity', but that the fire followed on from the examples in Kent creating a level of excitement amongst the paupers made even worse by Cobbett's lecture.⁷⁰

Arson and intimidation continued the next day: Lainer left Battle, albeit temporarily, due 'to anonymous and other threats' and at 4pm farmer Quaife had one of his barns set on fire. Some smartly dressed strangers had been seen outside the farm earlier that afternoon, leading to the hypothesis that it was caused by gentlemen 'travelling about the county in gigs'. At about 10pm Mr. Farncomb's stacks were set alight on his farm at nearby Icklesham, and at 11pm a mass assemblage gathered at the George Inn (Battle), prompting the authorities to send an express to Hastings calling for military assistance. Nothing transpired but threats were openly made that the town would be burnt down that night. The only further fire that night, though, occurred at midnight on Robert Watts' farm, where the labourers assisted the Hastings fire engine, further fuelling the belief that local labourers were not the arsonists.⁷¹ Over the next few days Battle remained tense. The assistant overseer returned to further threats that he would be 'treated like the one at Brede', the example of which so worried the Battle authorities that the Earl of Egremont, the Lord Lieutenant of Sussex, advised Peel that it was impossible to keep the peace. Besides Battle, plans were also afoot to remove assistant overseers at Ticehurst, Burwash, Heathfield and 'other places'. On the morning of 8 November the military finally arrived at Battle, making an instant impact, too late though to prevent the posting of a notice on a 'gentleman's gates threatening that unless the labourers were paid 2/6 a day his house would be set on fire.'⁷²

The examples of Brede and Battle made an almost immediate impact. Numerous threatening letters were sent to farmers in the vicinities of Lewes, Eastbourne and East Grinstead (including one accompanied by a rag soaked in blood): farmers were warned to take down their threshing machines, whilst Lord Gage at Firle was threatened that his mansion would be destroyed unless he discharged his baliff – the sending of a similar letter

⁷⁰ *Cobbett's Political Register*, 2 October; Freeling, General Post Office, to Phillips, 4 November, enclosing Ticknoll, Battle, to Freeling, 3 November, Barton, Clerk to the Battle Bench, to Peel, 3 November, PRO HO 52/10, ff.354-6 and 357-8; *Brighton Herald*, 6 November; *Maidstone Journal*, 9 November; *Brighton Gazette*, 11 November 1830.

⁷¹ Ticknall, Battle, Thomas Quaife, Battle both 5 November, Barton, Battle, 4 and 5 November, to Peel, PRO HO 52/10, ff.363-4, 364-6, 359-60 and 361-2; *Times*, 8 November 1830.

in late October to the Earl of Sheffield at Fletching later ended in the Assize dock.⁷³ The most tangible local impression, however, was first manifest at Burwash where on Sunday 7 November the 'labouring population...assembled *en masse*' and declared that they were going to remove the assistant overseer, using force if necessary. However, on being informed that a general meeting of the magistrates, lawyers, farmers, tradesmen and labourers was to be held at Battle the following day, the plan was postponed. Such information did nothing to save farmer Hilder's barn at nearby Robertsbridge from being set on fire that evening.⁷⁴

The following day began explosively when the unpopular Eastbourne farmer Moses Fielder had a barley stack set alight. Meanwhile 400 labourers had gathered at the Rye Wharf and took a more conciliatory approach to their employers. They elected a chairman and proceeded to discuss their grievances and how to redress them with several 'popular Gentlemen of Rye'.⁷⁵ Reconciliation, however, was not on the minds of the labourers at Battle who had sent a message to their brethren at Seddlescomb 'and other adjoining parishes', calling on them to join at Battle 'in organising a force to resist the military'. 'Several bodies of labourers... from different parishes' did go to Battle, compelling all other labourers they met to join them. The demands of the assembled labourers at the Special Petty Sessions were considered and 'satisfactorily arranged', thus adding grist to the mill of those elsewhere calling for higher wages. The precedent set was, with minimal delay, attempted to be enforced elsewhere. At Seddlesomb the labourers presented their employers with a petition calling for wages of 2/3 a day in winter (instead of 1/9) and 2/6 in summer, and in return they would 'do all they could to protect their employers property from incendiaries and others' – a blatant reference to the earlier pronouncement which had condemned incendiarism as an act 'no Englishman will be found to countenance'. The farmers, however, stated that such terms were impossible, the labourers replied that they were 'fully aware of the impossibility but... we will support you in resisting the taxes and the tithes'; the farmers then agreed to their demands. At Guestling the 'paupers' had given the farmers notice to meet on the 8th at 10am, with the proviso that if they did not come they would be fetched. Almost all attended to hear the 130 assembled labourers state that 'they did not any longer intend to go on in misery' and therefore wanted 2/3 a day in winter and 2/6 in summer 'and that you may meet this fair demand' by

⁷² Earl of Egremont, Petworth, 7 November, enclosing Courthope, Whiligh, to Egremont, 7 November, Godfrey Webster, Battle Abbey, 8 November, to Peel, PRO HO 52/10, ff.617-9 and 383-5; *Maidstone Journal*, 9 November 1830.

⁷³ Charles Ford, Sun Fire Office, London, to Peel, 11 November, PRO HO 52/10, ff.582-3; *Brighton Herald*, 6 November; *Times*, 8 and 15 November; *Sussex Advertiser*, 8 November; *Brighton Gazette*, 11 November 1830.

⁷⁴ Battle Bench, 12 November, Godfrey Webster, Battle Abbey, 8 November, to Peel, PRO HO 52/10, ff.394-5 and 383-5; *Rochester Gazette*, 16 November 1830.

'shak[ing] off the oppression of the tithes'. The parson, who was also present, was requested to cut his tithes from £800 to £500 a year. He, hardly being in a position to refuse, readily assented to their demand. A similar anti-tithe stance was adopted at Hooe, where, upon the tithe collector attempting to claim his booty, a gathering of 'insurgents' drove him out of the parish. These insurgents reinforced their point later that evening when the barn of a Hooe paper miller was set on fire, one of three fires in the vicinity that night according to Sir Godfrey Webster.⁷⁶

Robertsbridge was the scene of the most dramatic incident that day. The poor, 'ground down' by low wages supplemented only by low-grade flour (given as relief-in-kind), had assembled in the streets surrounding the Inn where the farmers were meeting. This was a concerted plan. Several farmers had lent their support to the labourers' calls for higher wages in return for the labourers helping to intimidate the tithe holder into making a considerable reduction. However, the assembled crowd went further, detaining Mr. Johnson, the much hated bailiff of a large landholder in the parish, whom they roughly handled. This heightened atmosphere of intimidation did succeed in pressurising the two magistrates present to sign an agreement to raise the wages, and for one of them, who was also the tithe holder, to sign an agreement cutting his tithes by 25%.⁷⁷

The intensity of the siege at Robertsbridge added further fuel to an already well-stoked insurrectionary furnace. The next day (9 November) it exploded, leaving no part of the eastern Weald untouched. The labourers at Fairlight had gathered at the same time as the Robertsbridge meeting and proceeded to perambulate the parish, calling on all farmers to meet the next morning 'to settle the wages paid in future'. The meeting took place as planned, but not before the poor had assembled at the poorhouse (at 5am) and informed Mr. Sims, the 'superintendent', that 'his time had come'. After attempting to resist the crowd, Sims had a halter placed around his neck, by which those assembled lead him like an ass to nearby Pett Street, where they took refreshment, kindly offering the 'late overseer a glass of spirits'. The throng, including 'women and children, with fire-irons, bells, and warming pans', proceeded to find a cart, in which they placed Sims before wheeling him out of the parish. At the meeting the labourers produced a list of wages, a copy of the Guestling agreement, which the farmers, after some debate, accepted.⁷⁸ A similar course was also adopted at Burwash, Westham and at Ninfield, where the triumphant mission of the

⁷⁵ *Brighton Gazette*, 11 November; *Hastings & Cinque Ports Iris*, 13 November 1830.

⁷⁶ J.C. Sharpe, Dormons, Northiam, 9 November, Godfrey Webster, Battle Abbey, 8 November, to Peel, PRO HO 52/10, ff.386-7 and 383-5; E.J. Curteis to H.B. Curteis, Windmill Hill, Battle, 9 November, ESCRO AMS 5995/3/13; *Brighton Herald*, 13 November; *Rochester Gazette*, 16 November 1830.

⁷⁷ Godfrey Webster, Battle, 9 November, Messrs Collingwood and Young, Hawkhurst, 11 November 1830, to Peel, PRO HO 52/10, ff.388-9 and 52/8, ff.160-70.

⁷⁸ *Hastings & Cinque Ports Iris*, 13 November 1830.

parishioners ended calamitously when, on attempting to enter Battle town with their captive, they were met by Sir Godfrey Webster, who, accompanied by two fellow magistrates, '25-30 specials and some active persons', rushed into the mob and succeeded in apprehending 20 of the rioters, of whom four were later committed to Lewes for trial and two held to bail.⁷⁹ Upon their apprehension Webster set off to Hurst Green, in the parish of Salehurst, on the report that a group had assembled there. On his arrival he found '300 farmers' men had gathered, showing no symptoms of disorderly behaviour', to demand Rev. Cottie reduce the tithes so 'the farmers can give us better wages'.⁸⁰ At Brede those active in previously expelling the assistant overseer regrouped, at the request of the farmers, to lobby Mr. Hele to lower his tithes. Labourer Bryant stated that the group, of which he was part, begged Hele to 'throw something off for us and our poor Children and to set up a School for them'. The farmers then managed to negotiate a 50% reduction, upon the announcement of which the group gave three cheers and 'set the Bells ringing and were all as pleased as could be at what we had done'.⁸¹ Equally peaceable were the crowd assembled for the second day on the wharf at Rye, where it was announced that their 'desires' made the previous day had been acceded too by the merchants and traders of the town. On this announcement they proceeded around the town with a band of music, and were later plied with beer. Similar assemblages over wages and tithes also occurred at Ewhurst, Northiam, Peasmarsh, Udimore, Benenden, Rolvenden, and Tenterden.⁸²

Hawkhurst, however, was the centre of agitation that day. On the previous day labourers began to congregate for a meeting that had 'been appointed' at Hawkhurst. Lord Balmanno's Benenden residence had been surrounded by 100 men who compelled all his labourers to join them, notwithstanding their apparent satisfaction with their level of wages. John Beale, a 37 year-old Hawkhurst carpenter, was a key instigator; he had earlier attended the affray at Robertsbridge and on his midnight return to Hawkhurst became 'the first to start the riot'. Throughout the night Beale, and others, traversed Hawkhurst and

⁷⁹ Gentlemen of Burwash, to H.B. Curteis, 9 November, ESCRO AMS 5995/3/12; Sir Charles Blunt, Heathfield, 11 November, Godfrey Webster, Battle, 9 November, to Peel, PRO HO 52/10, ff.536-7 and 388-9; *Brighton Gazette*, 11 November 1830 and 4 August 1831. According to Sir Godfrey several members of the mob were armed with pistols, something that he believed marked them out as smugglers.

⁸⁰ *Times*, 12 November; Battle Bench, to Peel, 12 November 1830, PRO HO 52/10, ff.394-5.

⁸¹ Sir Godfrey Webster, Battle, to Peel, 20 November, enclosing examination of Joseph Bryant, labourer, 19 November, PRO HO 52/10, ff.422-3 & 428; *Times*, 18 November 1830. Regarding the involvement of the farmers, Bryant stated that: 'a day or two before Mr. Hele's Tithe Audit Mr. John Bourne came to me in one of the Fields where I was at work for him and said that he should like us to go down to the Tithe Audit and see if we would get a little of the Tithe off for them and we were to go altogether but to behave very civil and only to shew themselves. Other men in the Parish have told me that their Masters spoke to them in the same way. The Farmers I have heard talk of one Mr. Frank Bourne Mr. William Coleman and Mr. Reed.'

⁸² *Hastings & Cinque Ports Iris*, 13 November; Samuel Selmes, Beckley, to H.B. Curteis, 9 November, ESCRO AMS 5995/3/11; J.C. Sharpe, Dormons, Northiam, to Peel, 9 November 1830, PRO HO 52/10, ff.386-7.

'several of the adjoining parishes' calling on 'the poor and ill-disposed' to join their growing band: any resistance met was countered by either forcible compulsion or by the humiliating practice of 'chalking' the backs of these 'deserters'. Clearly the rising was well orchestrated. The party's first target was Longhurst Farm, in Hawkhurst, where they destroyed a threshing machine that had actually been taken to pieces about a fortnight earlier. 'I never saw any body do a thing more deliberately (as if at his daily labour)', noted one farmer. The party then headed to the village to demand higher wages and more generous relief, 'work or no work'. The fear generated by the affray at Robertsbridge the day before combined with their mode of assembling which was 'riotous and alarming to the timid' and the knowledge that no military force was at hand effectively meant that their demands were given into under duress. Several of the crowd were identified: a 'notorious smuggler who never does any work', a journeyman bricklayer, an apprentice tailor, and several journeymen carpenters. The same gang were probably also responsible for the destruction of Mr. Luck's threshing machine at Benenden.⁸³

Nearby Goudhurst also 'rose' for the first time on the 9th when a party of men, lead by Stephen Eves, a politicised sawyer, 'proceeded *generally* over the parish' [my emphasis] compelling others to join them, calling at the 'houses of the respectable for charity', whilst complaining about taxes, tithes, rents, sinecures and other 'state incomes'. The party met again on the following day and, according to briefs prepared by the Treasury Solicitor, endeavoured to 'excite a friendly feeling, if not cooperation, [on] the part of the farmers by telling them tithes should no longer be paid and that if farmers would raise wages they would stop the tithes'. They proceeded throughout Goudhurst and 'adjoining parishes', including Lamberhurst and Horsmonden, where they visited the farmhouses offering the farmers the same deal, in their alleged efforts to 'effect a general tumult'.⁸⁴ Elsewhere a

⁸³ Collingwood and Young, Hawkhurst, 11 November, Balmano, 49 Upper Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square, London, 12 November, to Peel, W. Collingwood, Brighton, to Phillips, 22 November, PRO HO 52/8 ff.166-70, 158a-60, and 52/10 ff.305-6; Prosecution Briefs prepared by the Treasury Solicitor in the case of the King vs. George Barrow, John Ballard, John Tuckner, William Chrisford and John Beale, Kent Winter Assizes, PRO TS 11/943; *Maidstone Journal*, 16 November; *Times*, 16 and 18 November. Hobsbawm and Rudé list that assemblages also occurred on 9 November at Bodiam, Frant, Newenden, Mayfield, Ticehurst and Wadhurst. According to the *Maidstone Journal* (16 November) a scene similar to the one enacted at Hawkhurst also occurred at Sandhurst, Bodiam, Newenden, Ticehurst, and 'other places'. This report was reprinted in the *Times* (18 November) and is one of the references given by Hobsbawm and Rudé, none of the other references given mention these places. The *Maidstone Journal* report however does not specify which day these events occurred. The Battle Bench on 12 November (1830) notified Peel that assemblages had occurred at Burwash, Etchingham and Salehurst. That the assemblages at Battle and Hawkhurst drew men from the surrounding parishes it would seem likely that parishioners from the places listed in the *Maidstone Journal* were in some way involved that day. The evidence for the involvement of men from Frant and Wadhurst is even less clear. An assemblage the following day at Wadhurst not listed by Hobsbawm and Rudé is probably the first major involvement of people from both places, although some may have been drawn into the assemblage at Goudhurst on the 9th (see below).

⁸⁴ Prosecution Briefs prepared by the Treasury Solicitor in the case of the King vs. William Standen, Stephen Eves and Richard Cutbush, West Kent Epiphany Sessions 1831, PRO TS 11/943; Camden,

meeting of the 'occupiers of land' at Etchingham, called that day to consider the level of wages and how to best employ the parish labourers, was set upon by an assemblage who presented the gathered farmers a petition calling for a raft of changes to both employment and relief scales. The farmers graciously assented to the demands, but feared that whilst they 'did not consider the rate of wages and relief too high...in the present distressed state of agriculture they are totally unable to continue for any length of time to pay the same'. Further assemblages that day at Wadhurst and Ticehurst – where the assistant overseer after threats had already escaped to Rochester - intimidated farmers into raising wages, with similar attempts made at Rye and Playden.⁸⁵ At Eastbourne 'two or three disaffected men...determined that this place should not escape the contagion' leading about 30 paupers and compelling others to 'cause a general rise'. However, they were successfully prevailed upon to disperse by several gentlemen.⁸⁶

During the following week the Weald remained in a state of disorder, with assemblages on the 11th at Cranbrook, Benenden (where the assistant overseer was forced to flee), Rolvenden, Frant and Wadhurst, where those gathered promised the overseer 'a good ducking'.⁸⁷ Meanwhile a party from Dallington, including the overseers, had undertaken a twenty mile round trip to meet their non-resident clergyman at his favoured Hawkhurst in order to compel him to refund half of the tithes he had recently received. It was quite clear to the Home Office informants that 'they had been set up by the farmers' keen to not miss out on the financial gains of many other Wealden agriculturalists.⁸⁸ An assemblage had also started to gather during the night at Mayfield where they remained until the morning, pressing 'all that came near into their ranks', including farmers and tradespeople, before visiting Rev. Kirby, from whom they won a substantial tithe reduction, and Mr. Read who hired part of Lord Carrington's tithes, whom they accompanied 'with drum and fife' out of the parish. The following day (12 November) they again met at Mayfield to remove the assistant overseer, only to be thwarted by the arrival of Sir Godfrey Webster with a detachment of military from Battle. A 'violent paper...carried around the 3

Arlington Street, to Peel, 12 November, and enclosures, PRO HO 52/8, ff.248-53; *Kentish Gazette*, 12 November; *Maidstone Journal*, 16 November; *Times*, 18 November 1830.

⁸⁵ Resolutions of a meeting of the Etchingham occupiers, 10 November, forwarded to H.B. Curteis, same day, Anne Mascall, to H.B. Curteis, 10 November, ESCRO AMS5995 3/15 and 14; Battle Bench, to Peel, 12 November, PRO HO 52/10, ff.394-5; *Rochester Gazette*, 16 November. This was possibly also the day of an assemblage at Lydd, near to Playden: *Times*, 17 November 1830.

⁸⁶ *Brighton Gazette*, 18 November 1830.

⁸⁷ Camden, Arlington Street, and enclosures, Messrs. Collingwood and Young, Hawkhurst, enclosing, R. Forbes and T. Moneypenny, Rolvenden, to Peel, all 11 November, J. Major, Tunbridge Wells, to Camden, 11 November, forwarded to the Home Office, Thomas Hodges, Hemsted, Benenden, to Home Office, 11 November, PRO HO 52/8, ff.248-253, 166-70, 235-6 and 171-2; *Times*, 19 November; *Brighton Gazette*, 18 November 1830.

⁸⁸ Collingwood and Young, Hawkhurst, to Peel, 11 November, PRO HO 52/8, ff.166-170; *Kent Herald*, 18 November 1830.

adjacent parishes and...assented [to] by many occupiers of land' was seized by Webster, 'to prevent its circulation at Mayfield'; it read

Now gentlemen this is wat wee intend to have for a married man to have 2s and 3d per day and all over two children 1/6 per head a week and if a man has got any boys or girls over age for to have enough that they may live by there labour and likewise all single men to have 1/9 a day per head and we intend to have the rents lowered likewise and this is what we intend to have before we leave the place and if ther is no alteration we shall proceed further about it. For we are all as one and we will keep to each other.

Clearly relief supplements were pragmatically accepted to be an integral part of their attempt to 'live by there labour'. Whilst Webster's mediating between 'the mob' and the occupiers had restored the peace, it did not disband the 'mob'.⁸⁹ Some of those gathered at Mayfield, including several men from Wadhurst and Frant, proceeded to Rotherfield, headed by a farmer, pressing other labourers en route. At Rotherfield they not only obtained money and victuals from various fearful people, forced Rev. Crawley to sign a paper agreeing to cut his tithes by half and made Mr Cochrane take down his threshing machine, but also distributed 'inflammatory placards' and proclaimed that in order to 'release the country the Duke of Wellington's throat must be cut', the first clear sign of politics in a Wealden 'Swing' incident.⁹⁰ It had been feared that the same party, joined by a large 'mob' from Wadhurst and Frant, were, on 12 November, to visit either Tonbridge 'upon Tithes Taxes and Rents' or Tunbridge Wells (where the common had twice been set alight in the past week), it being market day; in the end they chose Tonbridge.⁹¹ Plans were also afoot that day at Beckley and Mountfield to assemble in order to gain an increase in wages, and at the latter place to convey one of the principal occupiers out of the parish in a cart, a scheme that was applied that day to the Warbleton assistant overseer.⁹²

The success of the past few days gave rise to further exploits the following day when the 'Rotherfield mob', as planned, went about Frant, Rotherfield, Groombridge, Withyham and Mayfield making their 'usual demands' and where they were not successful

⁸⁹ For the 10th and 11th see: J. Major, Tunbridge Wells, to Camden, 11 November, forwarded to the Home Office, Battle Bench, to Peel, 12 November, PRO HO 52/8 ff.235-6 and 52/10 ff.394-6; *Hampshire Telegraph*, 22 November. According to Sir Charles Blunt the men who entered Mayfield town on the night of 10 November intended to also remove the assistant overseer: Sir Charles Blunt, Heathfield, to Peel, 11 November, HO 52/10, ff.526-7. For 12th see: Godfrey Webster, Battle Abbey, 12 November, and enclosure, Earl of Liverpool, Buxted Park, 14 November, to Peel, PRO HO 52/10, ff.397-9 and 52/8, f.161; *Brighton Gazette*, 18 November 1830.

⁹⁰ Earl of Liverpool, Buxted Park, 14 November, to Peel, 52/8, f.161; *Brighton Gazette*, 18 November; *Brighton Herald*, 20 November; *Sussex Advertiser*, 22 November 1830.

⁹¹ Mr. Scudamay, Maidstone, J. Major, Tunbridge Wells, to Camden, both 11 November, forwarded to the Home Office, PRO HO 52/8, ff.212-3 and ff.235-6; *Brighton Gazette*, 11 November 1830; Wells, 'Social Protest', p.161.

⁹² Battle Bench, 12 November, Charles Blunt, Heathfield, 11 November, to Peel, PRO HO 52/10, ff.394-5 and 526-7; Indictment of William Isted, labourer, Sussex Winter Assizes 1830, PRO Assi 94/2073.

threatening to return with ‘additional strength’. Reports from Groombridge stated two well-dressed strangers accompanied them on horseback and used money to ‘excite the mob and induce others to join them’. Such reports were echoed by a Kent magistrate who claimed that at Maresfield two men, supposedly from Hertfordshire, were ‘employed’ in attempting to create an assemblage, but despite fleeing the parish they were found later that day in a Tunbridge Wells pub.⁹³ Benenden also rose again, it being the rent day of Mr. Hodges, a Kent MP, in their attempt to compel an increase in wages. At 2pm, whilst the farmers were in the Bull Inn, a considerable body of labourers assembled on the Green. An application was made to them to disperse but was ignored. By 5pm it was dark, and, with the farmers still in conference, the crowd sent in a paper, given to them by Rolvenden men, stating their demands and that they would not disperse or allow anyone to leave the Inn until ‘something was done’. The response again was to call for the men to disperse, which was this time met by a cry of ‘we will not ‘till we are righted’. Half an hour later they made a rush for the door, which on being broken down allowed some of the men to storm the room, where they remained, despite further requests, for half an hour. On an attempt to call the military, the constable was obstructed and the candles put out, plunging the captives into fear. When the military finally arrived, the crowd dispersed but not before five ‘ringleaders’ were seized and taken into custody.⁹⁴

Meanwhile a parallel movement was occurring in the villages between Maidstone and Tonbridge. Whereas the whole of Kent west of Maidstone and north of the Weald other than for a few isolated cases of arson had remained seemingly ‘Swing’ free during early November,⁹⁵ according to a Maidstone magistrate parties were having continued success in collecting money ‘from house to house between Yalding to Tonbridge’. It transpired the party in question was lead by Robert Price – again – and on the 11th had traversed Hadlow, East and West Peckham, Nettlestead, and Yalding, compelling all labourers to join them, calling for higher wages as well as money. According to one labourer, compelled to join the party at Yalding, Price had stated that ‘he did not think much of Yalding – for he had expected when he came there that he should have raised a much larger mob’. By the end of the day Price had collected at least £11, mainly from local grandees, a sum that was divided amongst the party and spent at various pubs. Two days earlier a party of ‘machine breakers’

⁹³ *Brighton Gazette*, 18 November; *Hastings & Cinque Ports Iris*, 20 November; W. Bremridge, Rusthall, to Peel, 14 November 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.11-12.

⁹⁴ *Kent Herald*, 18 November; *Kentish Gazette*, 19 November; Prosecution Briefs prepared by the Treasury Solicitor in the case of the King vs. William Austen, Kent Winter Assizes 1830, PRO TS 11/934. An assemblage had also been threatened that day at Peasmarsh but it is not reported whether anything actually occurred: Battle Bench, to Peel, 12 November 1830, PRO HO 52/10, ff.394-5.

⁹⁵ See Appendix 1.2. On 7 November the Queen’s Head public house at Northfleet was set alight. On 12 December a warrant was issued for the arrest of the landlord, suspected of setting fire to the pub to claim the insurance. *Maidstone Journal*, 9 November; Twopenny and Essell, clerks to Aylesford Magistrates, Rochester to Melbourne, 15 Dec 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.116-117.

had also passed through the same area, compelling the stone-breakers working on the roads at Goose Green to join them.⁹⁶ Other isolated risings also occurred. At Headcorn (12 November) the labourers took a different line to elsewhere, calling on the different farmers to 'consult how to find them employment'. The farmers met immediately and concluded that it was the 'excessive burdens imposed...that rendered them unable to give employment at a remunerating price'. The farmers then drew up a petition to Parliament calling for relief from these burdens and a reform in Parliament. The same evening the scheduled tithe dinner and audit at Boxley ended in farce when, of the 100 people expected to attend, only 30 arrived, and those the 'most opulent farmers' who insisted on only paying 50% of the tithe. The Rev. refused their offer, prompting the farmers to leave without paying anything.⁹⁷ Indeed, during the course of the previous week the neighbourhood of Maidstone was in considerable alarm: cases of arson occurred at Rodmersham (9 November), Bearsted, Thurnham, Rock Hill and Marden (10th), Rock Hill (11th) as well as a further case of arson at Otham on the 12th which followed a failed attempt by a wandering gang to press the employees of Mr. Green's paper mill. As Sir Charles Blunt correctly analysed, 'there is no fixed boundary to the rapidly extending evil'.⁹⁸

VII

By 13 November 'Swing' had effectively been in control of the whole of the East Sussex Weald for a week. Other than the sending of threatening letters in the preceding fortnight in the areas around East Grinstead, Horsham, Lewes and Petworth, as well as to various farmers in Cuckfield, Mayfield was as far west in Sussex as the mobile gatherings had spread.⁹⁹ This would now change. On 13 November the *Brighton Herald* reported that the parish of Hurstpierpoint (seven miles due north of Brighton) had for the last two or three days been anticipating a disturbance, and by the 15th the *Sussex Advertiser* stated that an assemblage had occurred there, the date therefore being the either the 13th or 14th.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Mr. Scudamay, Maidstone, to Camden, 11 November, PRO HO 52/8, ff.212-3; *Times*, 18 November; Depositions of Charles Chamley, fish seller, and John Luck, husbandry labourer, both 19 November 1830, CKS Q/SBw 124/4 and 5; *Kent Herald*, 18 November. *Kentish Gazette*, 12 November; *Maidstone Gazette*, 16 November 1830.

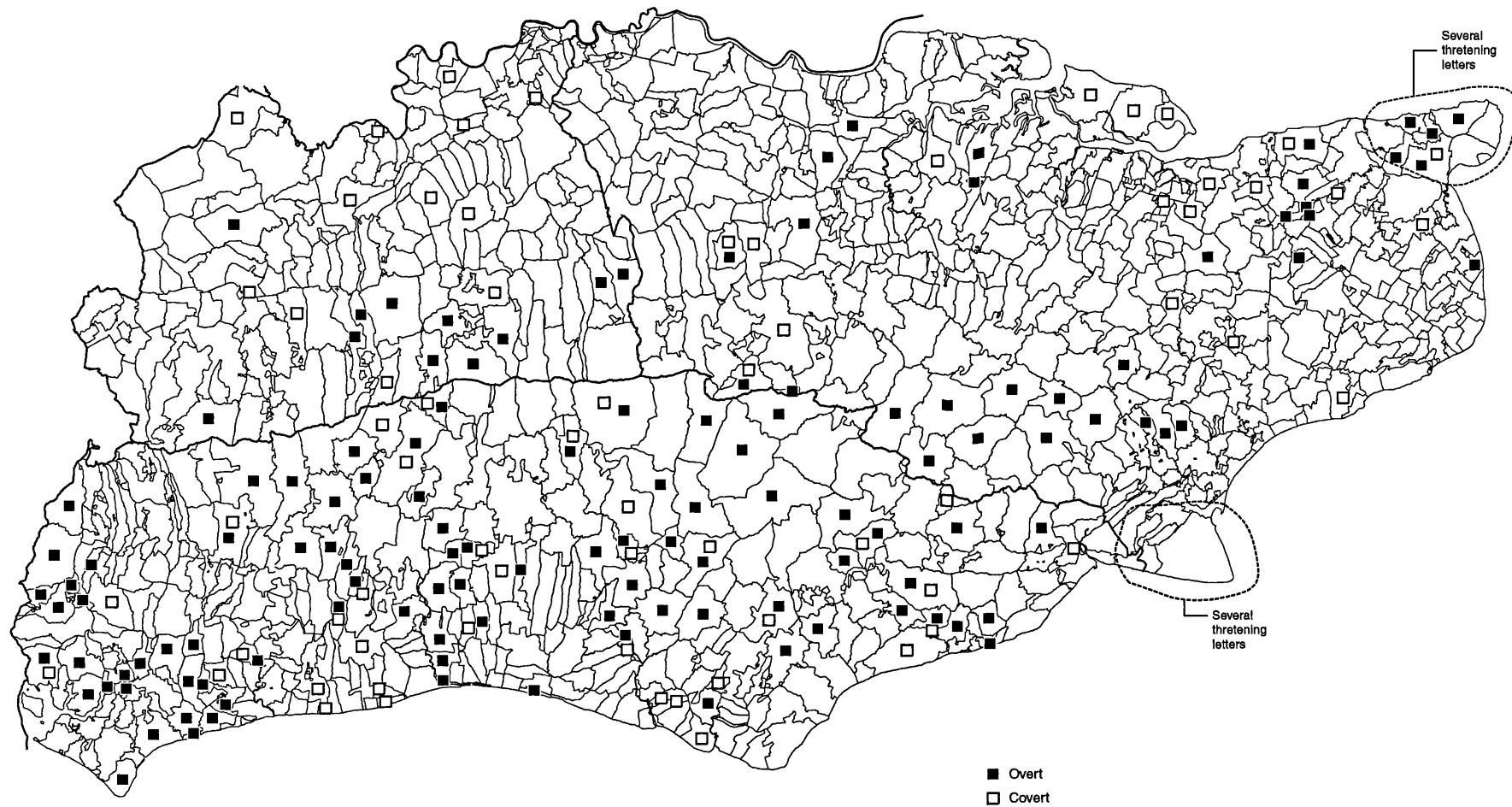
⁹⁷ *Maidstone Journal*, 16 November; *Times*, 18 November; *Kent Herald*, 18 November 1830.

⁹⁸ Mr. Scudamore, Maidstone, to Camden, 10 November, in Camden, Arlington Street, 12 November, Charles Blunt, Heathfield, 11 November, to Peel, PRO HO 52/8, ff.248-253 and 52/10, ff.526-7; *Kentish Gazette*, 12 November; *Maidstone Journal*, 16 November; *Times*, 18 and 19 November; *Maidstone Gazette*, 16 November 1830.

⁹⁹ For details of individual incidents see Appendix 1.1

¹⁰⁰ *Brighton Herald*, 13 November; *Sussex Advertiser*, 15 November 1830.

Map 1.5: Swing Protests, 13 November 1830 to 30 November 1830



Plus several threatening letters sent to farmers in unidentified parishes near Canterbury

However, there was even more decisive evidence that 'Swing' was moving westward and beyond the Weald. At 9pm on the 12th farmer Ide had a barn set on fire at Coldwaltham, between Arundel and Petworth, which, whilst not an unusual event in West Sussex, was in the context of the events to the east a grave signal.¹⁰¹ Fears of insurrectionary crowds in West Sussex were made real the next morning when an assemblage of over fifty men gathered at nearby Kirdford to force an increase in wages. The assemblage was almost forty miles away from Mayfield. This local example provided the trigger for much of West and Central Sussex to rise. The following day (14th), being a Sunday, not the most effective day to strike for higher wages, witnessed only a few minor affrays. To the east an assemblage gathered at Tenterden; one was planned to occur at Burwash, though whether it did is unclear; at Ringmer a group of labourers assembled near the Church and when Divine Service was over 'assailed the principal farmers about wages', surrounding the overseer, seizing his bridle bringing him to the ground. To the west a minor affray at Petworth ended with the commitment to the House of Correction of two drunken protagonists who had spent their week's wages on a drinking binge before violently threatening the overseer.¹⁰²

The example of the Kirdford men was truly felt on Monday morning when four distinct areas in West Sussex 'rose': between Arundel and Bognor; the neighbourhood of Thakeham; the vicinity of Worthing¹⁰³; and Shoreham. The assemblage centring on Bognor also drew labourers from Felpham, Yapton and Bersted, who intended to destroy all thrashing machines and increase their wages from 10/- to 14/- a week before marching on Arundel. 'They were not armed, but there appeared much firmness amongst them...they had in no instance a recourse to violence, but...would not leave the premises of farmers till they obtained their object'. However, whilst they were marching to Arundel, the Earl of Surrey, who had been presiding at a meeting of the trustees of the Shoreham road from which he was hurriedly called, managed to stop them marching further. A considerably augmented gang reassembled the following day but accompanied their same demands with more violent threats, threatening to set fire to the premises of farmers who refused to destroy their threshing machines. At nearby Chichester business at the weekly corn and beast market ground to a halt on the understanding that 1,000 'of the peasantry' would enter

¹⁰¹ *Sussex Advertiser*, 15 November 1830.

¹⁰² Indictment of John Champion and Thomas Champion, labourers, West Sussex Epiphany Sessions 1831, WSCRO QR/Q 51; Mr. Hawkes, to Mabbot, Uckfield, 15 November, Charles Blunt, Heathfield, to Peel, 11 November, PRO HO 52/8, ff.180-2 and 52/10, ff.526-7; *Brighton Herald*, 20 November; Times, 23 November 1830.

¹⁰³ The rising started at Broadwater where a tithe reduction was demanded, before moving on to Worthing Town. However the Coastal Blockade successfully managed to disperse the 200 strong assemblage. The report in the *Brighton Gazette* (18 November 1830) stated that the crowd was drawn from the 'vicinity' of Worthing, suggesting that men from parishes other than Broadwater (of which Worthing was a part) were involved.

the city at noon. To pre-empt their invasion, the magistrates and several principal farmers went to meet the gang and without resistance capitulated to their demands.¹⁰⁴

At Thakeham, although Rev. Moore had averted any trouble at his tithe audit, it being known that he was to have been 'hustled' on his return, he was later called upon by a small assemblage who asked him to demand the farmers to 'give them two shillings day which had been done in other places', the neighbouring parishes of West Chiltington, Sullington and Warminghurst having successfully risen earlier that day. Under compulsion Moore later attended a meeting with the farmers, who had meanwhile assented to the labourers' demands, and after a heated discussion consented to a tithe cut.¹⁰⁵ When the same group reassembled, to the reported strength of 500, the following day at Nutbourne, they were soon suppressed by a military detachment and some special constables.¹⁰⁶

At Shoreham a gathering of 100-200 'working people' paraded the parish compelling other labourers to join them calling for higher wages and largesse before travelling an extraordinary 20 miles to attend the meeting at Ringmer. This journey emphasises the centrality of mobility to 'Swing'; travelling parties covering long distances inevitably drew people from the parishes through which they passed (at least six in this case) either by compulsion, sheer curiosity, or a shared belief. The sight of a large crowd could have other effects too, inspiring parishioners to rise in a like manner, or convincing local farmers to raise wages before they were forced to.¹⁰⁷ The activities of the Shoreham party also show that the Ringmer meeting had been systematically planned in advance, with the news either rapidly diffused from parish to parish or, more likely in this case, through emissaries sent to entice other parishes to attend. In the event those gathered at Ringmer were met by Lord Gage who proposed to hold a general meeting on Wednesday at which all grievances could be raised. It was not clear, however, what those assembled at Ringmer did after meeting Gage. Reports from Lewes suggested that a travelling party that had

¹⁰⁴ *Brighton Gazette*, 18 November; *Times*, 19 November; *Hastings & Cinque Ports Iris*, 20 November; *Hampshire Telegraph*, 22 November 1830.

¹⁰⁵ At the tithe dinner the assembled labourers also threatened that they would destroy farmer Tilly's threshing machine the following day; to avoid such a visitation Tilly destroyed it himself. At the later meeting on Moore offering a 10% tithe reduction one farmer stated that the valuation for the tithes were too high and what was therefore needed was a new valuation, infuriating Moore. The riled Reverend then asked the man for his name, but received only the telling retort 'Oh! I have a name?'. Deposition of Rev. Peter H. Moore, Thakeham, and Information of William Terry, farmer, Thakeham, both 27 December 1830, QR/W/758, ff257-8 and 263; Indictment of Harry Robinson, shoemaker, and William Smart, labourer, both West Chiltington, West Sussex Epiphany Sessions 1831, WSCRO QR/Q/51. See also Charlotte Palmer, Sullington, to her mother, 23 November 1830, WSCRO Add. Mss. 13,395

¹⁰⁶ *Times*, 23 November. The Nutbourne parish officers had also in the previous week received a threatening letter, alleged to have been sent by Mr. Polliway, a decayed Petworth merchant but now supported by Nutbourne. Letter to Duke of Richmond, 24 November 1830, WSCRO Goodwood 1477a, f.123.

visited 'most of the farmers in the vicinity' the same day had actually come 'from the direction of Ringmer'. Whatever, the consequence was that most of the farmers visited did increase the rate of wages and promised to destroy any machinery in their use.¹⁰⁸

Over the duration of the following week 'Swing' would tighten its grip over much of West Sussex. On 16 November, other than the aforementioned events around Chichester and Pulborough, further cases of arson occurred at Angmering, Kingsfold (in Warnham) and at the Rusper vicarage. Further to the east the sky was illuminated by the fire at Captain Arnes' West Hoathly farm, and at Fulking an anonymous letter was nailed to a stable door threatening to 'burn down your barns and you in them' if the recipient did not 'pull down your messhines and rise the poor mens wages'.¹⁰⁹ On Wednesday (17 November) Lord Gage, as planned, returned to Ringmer. After first addressing the 200 or so persons there assembled, Gage met with the farmers and 'other gentlemen' in the workhouse, resulting in 'a determination to give the men what they required', to which end Gage voluntarily reduced his tenants rents. On this being announced, the crowd gave three cheers and then symbolically pulled down the grindstone in front of the workhouse used to employ the poor at 9d a day. Despite this act of vandalism they were still regaled with beer, funded by a subscription, at a nearby public house. Their euphoria was especially dizzy in light of news of that Duke of Wellington had been overthrown. A similar gathering at nearby Laughton had also won the same concessions from the Earl of Chichester. By force and intimidation paternalism had been made to work.¹¹⁰

Events around Chichester though threatened to destabilize this developing understanding. A new episode in the rapidly unfurling movement had effectively commenced with the systematic destruction of threshing machines in the vicinity of Chichester, the first place such sustained destruction occurred outside of East Kent. During the day several 'conventional' assemblages had gathered in the vicinity of Chichester. One such assemblage that gathered at Halnaker, in Boxgrove parish, after having proceeded from Eartham, was met by Lord Lennox and several other magistrates, who successfully asserted that they should disperse and settle their grievances over pay with the farmers. However, the next day (18 November) they regrouped and following Lennox's suggestion visited the farmers in Halnaker, a move that was followed not only by their comrades in neighbouring Aldingbourne but by other parties 'traversing' the 'Manhood', the colloquial

¹⁰⁷ *Brighton Gazette*, 18 November. On 5 November the men employed on the works for the new bridge at Shoreham had struck for an increase in wages. However they were unsuccessful and had to return to work on lower daily wages: *Brighton Herald*, 13 and 20 November 1830.

¹⁰⁸ *Brighton Gazette*, 18 November; *Brighton Herald*, 20 November; *Hastings & Cinque Ports Iris*, 20 November 1830.

¹⁰⁹ *Brighton Gazette*, 18 and 25 November; *Brighton Herald*, 20 November; Charles Howell, Hove, to Peel, 17 November 1830, PRO HO 52/10, ff.410-2.

¹¹⁰ *Brighton Gazette*, 18 and 25 November; *Maidstone Journal*, 23 November 1830.

name for the headland between Chichester and the sea.¹¹¹ Of the other gatherings on the 17th, the one at Pagham dispersed upon being admonished by a posse of magistrates; those at Rogate and Harting on the Sussex-Hampshire border succeeded in raising wages; at Arundel a large peaceable assemblage filled various hostelrys; whereas of those assembled at Eastergate one man ended in the Assize dock for demanding money by menaces.¹¹²

Later that afternoon 'a party of idle and dissolute characters' from Chichester began pressing the labourers of Fishbourne and Bosham before breaking open a blacksmith's shop and stealing sledges, hammers and saws. The party then proceeded to various farms, machine makers, pubs and beer shops in Bosham, Fishbourne and Westbourne, calling for money and beer as well as destroying at least six threshing machines throughout the night. Stephen Farndell, one of the victims, fell foul of the gang not just for using the machine but also because he 'employed persons not belonging to the parish and...never attended the Vestries' which one of the gang 'did not think...right'. At 8am eight of the party whilst drinking and eating (beef steaks they had 'acquired' which they demanded the landlord cook for them) at the White Swan pub in Westhampnett were taken into custody.¹¹³ Their arrest did not stop the gang, though. 20 other members had gone to Westbourne, where from about 7am, they started pressing the labourers. Three hours later the party descended upon John King's Westbourne farm and found his servants taking the threshing machine to pieces; they took over and destroyed it themselves. From here the party crossed into Hampshire, where they destroyed machines in several parishes between Emsworth and Havant before returning to Sussex between 10 and 11pm, going on to destroy a threshing machine and a mill on the farm of Joseph Hounsom and a threshing machine on Charles Duke's farm.¹¹⁴ On Friday morning the gang 'continued their destructive work', visiting Woodmancote, Funtington, Prinsted and Nutbourne (both in

¹¹¹ *Hastings & Cinque Ports Iris*, 20 November; *Hampshire Telegraph*, 22 November 1830. This party was probably partly constituted by the 'many strangers' wandering around Chichester market on the morning of the 17th: *Ibid*.

¹¹² *Hastings & Cinque Ports Iris*, 20 November; Petersfield Post Office Deputy, to Freeling, 18 Nov, PRO HO 52/7, ff.31-2; *Brighton Gazette*, 18 November ad 23 December; *Sussex Advertiser*, 22 November 1830.

¹¹³ In chronological order: two machines at two different farms of Mr. Duggins, farmer; one machine of Mr. Bennett, farmer; one of Stephen Farndell, farmer, Bosham, at midnight; one of Henry Meaden, machine maker (whom the gang symbolically also compelled to join them), Bosham, between midnight and 1am; at least one of Zadick Levin Esq, farmer, Fishbourne, at about 3am. *Brighton Herald*, 20 November; *Sussex Advertiser*, 22 November; *Hampshire Telegraph*, 22 November; *Brighton Gazette*, 25 November; Examinations of John Dyer, victualler of the White Swan, Westhampnett, and Richard Caplin, labourer, Chichester, both 18 November, WSCRO QR/W/758, ff.204 and 206; Examinations of Stephen Farndell, farmer, Bosham, 18 November, and Henry Meaden, machine maker, Bosham, 20 November, WSCRO Goodwood 1477a R16 and 24. Reports of the number of machines destroyed that night varied wildly with the *Kentish Gazette* (23 November 1830) stating that between 13 and 14 machines were destroyed.

¹¹⁴ Examinations of David Bowman, yeoman, Westbourne, Thomas Ellman Thompson, Funtington, William Collins, labourer, Funtington, all 20 November, Francis Cronnsilk, Funtington, 15

Westbourne parish). At Westbourne they again visited the farm of Mary Harfield to destroy a threshing machine that she had promised to destroy herself upon their previous visit on Wednesday. The gang was evidently growing increasingly self-assured, one man claimed he was the Captain of the gang, and that as such 'if anyone was King he ought to be as he was Captain'. Another man boldly teased Lieutenant Henry Walker (who had gone to Harfield's to warn of the gangs approach) by rhetorically asking him, 'What do you think of the machine now'. The Lieutenant chillingly responded 'that there was another sort of machine called a Gallows and he would most likely be hanged on it shortly'.¹¹⁵ Later that morning a body of armed specials accompanied Sussex and Hampshire magistrates to Westbourne, where it was understood the gang had what they called a 'committee', and took a further nine men into custody. In defiance the barn and ricks of a neighbouring farmer were set alight later that evening.¹¹⁶

Unsurprisingly in light of the Kent and East Sussex experience, the capture of the men did not stop other parties from assembling. Other than the various gangs operating in the vicinity of Chichester, there were other assemblages in West Sussex on the 18th, including a peaceable demonstration at Arundel; a riotous gathering intent on largesse at Beeding; and one at Compton and West Marden attempting to raise wages.¹¹⁷ It was the events at Horsham, though, that most occupied the minds of the West Sussex authorities. A meeting had been arranged for that day to appoint a new assistant overseer, the previous incumbent having resigned his position. The previous evening a crowd had started to gather 'from all parts',¹¹⁸ however it was not until the morning of the 18th that the town began to 'wear a disturbed appearance'. A 'strong and numerous' party assembled and began to press every man they could find in Horsham and the surrounding villages. By 2pm numbered between 1,500 and 1,600. Their first target was the residence of Mr. Hurst, Horsham's late MP and tithe proprietor, who they demanded should attend the vestry. They then visited Mr. Chapman, an extremely wealthy old gentlemen, who was forced 'in the most imperative and violent manner' to give those assembled first 30 shillings, deemed

December, WSCRO QR/W/758, ff.222, 221, 218 and 219; Examination of John Gratwick, sawyer, Westbourne, 20 November 1830, WSCRO Goodwood 1477a R27.

¹¹⁵ Examinations of Henry Walker, Navy Lieutenant, and Charles Lutman, Navy Lieutenant, both 22 November 1830, WSCRO Goodwood 1477a R30.

¹¹⁶ *Sussex Advertiser*, 22 November; *Times*, 23 November 1830; *Brighton Gazette*, 25 November 1830.

¹¹⁷ William Holmes, Arundel, to Peel, 19 November, Petersfield Post Office Deputy, to Freeling, 18 November, PRO HO 52/10, ff.290-1 and 52/7, ff.31-2; *Brighton Gazette*, 25 November 1830; *Sussex Advertiser*, 28 March 1831.

¹¹⁸ During the day Timothy Shelley, a neighbouring magistrate, had received a threatening letter imploring him that if he 'wish[ed] to escape the impending danger in this world and that which is to come' he should 'first go round to all your parishioners and return all the last years tyths and inquire and hear from there own lips what distresses there in and how of them are drove to part with the last shilling to pay you this shamefull manopely'. The letter was chillingly signed 'a Friend to all Mr

insufficient, for the crowd believed he had a 'bushel of sovereigns in the house', then an extra sovereign, which placated them. They then, after taking a chariot from the King's Head public-house, returned to Hurst's with the intention of forcing him into the chariot and wheeling him 'like a gentleman' to the vestry. The crowd, however, fell in with Hurst who had already set out for the vestry, and decided to simply form a human barricade around him to accompany him on his way. At the meeting their demands were listened to, with Hurst promising they would be taken into consideration at a later date. On this the crowd in the church, 2,000-3,000 strong, became violently animated in their attempts to force an increase in wages. Mr. Tredcroft, a self-proclaimed supporter of their cause, raised his voice above the commotion and stated that wages would not even be increased by a penny 'under a threat or the language of intimidation': the crowd, though, bellowed a deafening roar of disapprobation. An offer of 2/- a day in winter and 2/6 in summer was then made, again falling short of their demand of 2/6. After barricading the church and preventing anyone from leaving, their demands were finally acceded to, with Hurst also agreeing to cut his rents and tithes. This was not the end of the day's activities. Mr. Rickward, a surgeon and known advocate of Cobbettian politics, took the opportunity to address those gathered to proclaim that, despite successfully gaining an advance in wages, 'they had not half got over their grievances' as for every ten shillings they spent on the necessary articles of life between seven and eight shillings were paid to the Government by way of various taxes. The only way this could be stopped was to meet again on Monday to petition parliament for a remission of taxes and a reform of the elective franchise, to which the crowd agreed. On exiting the church they tore up the iron railings surrounding the monuments before spending the rest of the day patrolling the whole of Horsham, calling at every house to demand money, breaking the windows of those who refused.¹¹⁹

So successful were the crowd in achieving their goal that they reassembled the following day to enforce a similar agreement in the surrounding parishes. After pressing the labourers they proceeded to Rev. Wood's Rasper tithe audit, but on arriving found it had been postponed. In frustration they stormed the house and trashed the dinner that had been prepared. Their next port of call was Abinger in Surrey, where they did no damage before

Swing about – beware of the fatel Dagger and the are [air] gun'. Thomas Sanctuary, The Nunnery, Horsham to Peel, 17 November 1830, PRO HO 52/10, ff. 532-3.

¹¹⁹ *Brighton Gazette*, 25 November; Thomas Sanctuary, The Nunnery, Horsham to Peel, 18 November, and Mr. Davis, Leystonstone, Essex to Peel, 20 November, and enclosures, PRO HO 52/10, ff.534-7 and 538-9. Fears of further violence at the Reform Meeting called for Monday (22 November) prompted the attendance of the military to preserve the peace. Their attendance forced the Horsham Radical Party, who had advertised the meeting throughout the surrounding countryside with placards, to raise a quick subscription to send messengers out in the countryside to prevent the attendance of 'vast numbers' of 'country people'. Moreover the intention of the Radical Party, according to a Government spy, was to later to use the power of numbers to force a gaol break. Walter Burrell, West Grinstead Park, to Peel, 21 November, *Idem.*, to Melbourne, 28 November, 5 and 12 December 1830, PRO HO 52/10, ff.555-6, 557-8, 565-6 and 573-5.

moving on to Wotton and then Ockley where the payment of tithes was prevented. The impact of the Horsham riot was also evident the same day at Itchingfield, a neighbouring parish to Horsham, where the labourers and farmers rose in unison in attempt to lower the tithes.¹²⁰ Evidence of direct agitation from Horsham was also clear at Woking, over 20 miles away, where that afternoon an 'immense magnitude of the peasantry' assembled, principally to consult about the payment of Mr. Bowcawen's tithes, however none of the five tithe payers attended. On the intervention of Mr. Drummond, a county magistrate, the crowd dispersed though, several joining the travelling Horsham party whilst another detachment, headed by a man in a smock frock, proceeded to Dorking to liberate some people incarcerated in the gaol. Later that evening several other participants in the Woking demonstration, on being questioned as to the object of their assembling, swore that they were forced to do what they did 'by the men of Horsham, whom they durst not obey'.¹²¹ Elsewhere in Surrey and West Sussex on the 19th, other than the abovementioned activities around Chichester, the neighbourhood of Arundel was again visited by roving parties levying contributions and making the usual demands of farmers; and at Reigate Mr. Neal a baker, brewer and farmer was targeted by incendiaries.¹²²

That weekend in West Sussex and Surrey 'Swing' was manifest both through a resort to arson (on Saturday 20 November at Petworth and Norwood; on Sunday 21 November at Findon, as well as foiled cases at Arundel and Sullington),¹²³ the appearance of strangers on the roads and in various yards, and a 'clamorous' assemblage at Steyning which spilled over into neighbouring Upper Beeding, where after forcing the Reverend to join them on a pub crawl he was compelled to 'materially lower' his tithes.¹²⁴ On Monday further assemblages occurred, affecting almost every parish in a line north from Worthing to Reigate. At 7am a 'mob' of 30-40 labourers visited the house of Mr. Penfold, a Lancing churchwarden, calling for the poorhouse to be demolished immediately and for the daily wages to be increased to 2/6. Upon being met by Colonel Lloyd, a magistrate, and other gentlemen, they refused to disperse, prompting the Riot Act to be read: however, an attempt

¹²⁰ *Brighton Gazette*, 25 November; Thomas Sanctuary, Nunnery, nr Horsham to Peel, 19 November; and, William Crawford, Dorking to Peel, 19 November 1830, PRO HO 52/10, ff. 542-3 and 204-5.

¹²¹ *Times*, 22 November 1830.

¹²² *Brighton Herald*, 20 November. Anon., The Priory, Reigate – Peel, 21 November 1830, PRO HO 52/10, ff.218-9.

¹²³ Petworth: Information of Sarah Mitchell, domestic servant, Petworth, 14 December, Deposition of John Andrews, servant, Petworth, 18 December, WSCRO QR/W 758, ff. 224-5 and 226-2; Norwood: *Times*, 24 November; Findon: *Brighton Gazette*, 25 November; Arundel: *Ibid.*; Sullington: Charlotte Palmer, Sullington, to her mother, 23 November 1830, WSCRO Add. Mss. 13,395.

¹²⁴ G. Sawyer, Ham (Surrey), to Peel, 20 November, PRO HO 52/10, ff.216-7. *Brighton Herald*, 27 November. Beeding had also 'risen' on Thursday 18 November when a crowd of 100 men 'extorted by threats a promise to reduce [the] tithes' from the clergyman. *Brighton Gazette*, 25 November 1830; *Sussex Advertiser*, 28 March 1831.

by the constables to seize the ringleaders was bitterly resisted, the Headborough being attacked in the affray. Only the arrival of the Coastal Blockade, who took three men into custody, restored order and only then after the crowd lunged forwards in an unsuccessful attempt to free the captives. By the next morning, commented the *Sussex Advertiser*, the people concerned were back at work as if nothing had happened.¹²⁵ The assemblage at Hicksted, in Twineham parish, was equally aggressive. After barricading the farmers into the Castle Inn, a paper was handed to the farmers calling for 2/6 a day. On the farmers claiming they could not afford such wages, the labourers accused them of starving the poor on 10d a day. The crowd also complained that the farmers were always 'boozing' at vestry meetings, 'that's where all the money's spent'. After a protracted wrangle, an agreement was reached that wages would be 2/3 a day in the winter and 2/6 in the summer. Two hours after the meeting finished the barn of the overseer Sharp was set alight.¹²⁶ By way of contrast, the gatherings at Cowfold, Nuthurst (bordering Horsham), Steyning and Poynings were considerably less aggressive but no less successful in their calls for wage increases and tithe cuts.¹²⁷ Meanwhile the Horsham instigated gatherings in south Surrey recommenced. Early that morning William Fisher, a labourer from Charlwood, had a letter delivered to him, by 'a Sussex man', ordering him the parish to go to Dorking to meet the parish men from Newdigate. These orders were followed. Throughout the morning separate parties gathered in Charlwood, Horley, Newdigate and Leigh and compelled all they could find, often by violent means, to join them, before all marching to Dorking, where, after 'a great riot' in which the magistrates were 'insulted and assaulted', the military intervened and took five prisoners, on which the crowd dispersed.¹²⁸

VIII

Whilst 'Swing' had spread beyond the Weald, it had in no sense left it since further parochial risings continued to occur, including on 15 November at Goudhurst, Withyham, Rotherfield, Buxted, and Crowborough (in Buxted parish) where those gathered specifically targeted Edward Harris' 'experimental' farm, destroying all the machinery, including the threshing machine.¹²⁹ The same day Rev. Hare of Herstmonceaux was visited at dawn,

¹²⁵ *Brighton Gazette*, 25 November; *Sussex Advertiser*, 29 November 1830.

¹²⁶ *Times*, 24 November; *Brighton Herald*, 27 November;

¹²⁷ Cowfold: *Brighton Herald*, 27 November; Nuthurst: *Brighton Gazette*, 25 November; Steyning: *Times*, 25 November; *Kentish Gazette*, 26 November; Poynings: *Times*, 25 November 1830.

¹²⁸ *Brighton Gazette*, 25 November; Lord Arden, Nork, nr. Epsom, 23 November, Clerk to the Reigate Bench, 26 November, enclosing various examinations and informations, taken 24 November 1830, to Melbourne, PRO HO 52/10, ff.226-7 and 237-42.

¹²⁹ Goudhurst: Charles Willis Jun., clerk to Cranbrook Bench, to Peel, 15 November 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.174-5; Prosecution Briefs prepared by the Treasury Solicitor in the case of the King vs. William Standen, Stephen Eves, and Richard Cutbush, West Kent Epiphany Sessions 1831, PRO TS

however, the crowd, were frustrated in their plan. Upon visiting again at dusk the men were met by which Sir Godfrey Webster and a military detachment from Battle, who were 'very roughly handled' by the crowd.¹³⁰ The Goudhurst gathering was equally dramatic. Two sub-parties had commenced traversing different parts of the parish at daybreak, gathering all the labourers and workmen they found before joining together at noon to call upon Mr. Springett, 'owner' of the Rectorial tithes, to demand his attendance at a general meeting they had called to discuss their demands of lower tithes, 2/3 a day in winter and 2/6 in summer, an allowance of 1/6 per week for every child above two in number, a reduction in cottage rents and the price of fuel. At 2pm the farmers and Springett met, but, just as they were about to concede to the crowds' demands, Captain King, a Cranbrook magistrate, arrived with a detachment of military. Their arrival did not have the desired effect, the crowd started shouting and cheering and advanced towards the soldiers. King intervened, hustling his way to the centre of the crowd to state that as their demands would be considered they should disperse immediately, a remark unsurprisingly ignored, prompting King to read the Riot Act. The crowd, though, still pressed forwards. King, defiant, stated that the times did not permit higher wages, to which Stephen Eves, a highly politicised sawyer, responded, 'if the farmers can't pay the wages we demand let 'em give us up the land', on which he was seized by King. The crowd, enraged yet further, rushed forwards to attempt a rescue. William Standen, a glover, raised a hedge stake and hit King, who instantly retaliated by striking Standen in the face with his staff, before collaring him. The crowd finally dispersed when the Riot Act was read for the second time.¹³¹

16 November was the last day of parallel disturbances in the Kent and East Sussex Weald, and included a successful wage demonstration by 800 people at hitherto quiet Hailsham.¹³² At Cuckfield the examination before the Bench of a seventeen year-old lad, apprehended on suspicion of having sent threatening letters to six local farmers, prompted a riotous gathering of the inhabitants in an attempt to free him. After breaking the windows of the Talbot Inn, the crowd marched over two miles to the residence of Mr. Cherry, one of

11/943. Withyham, Rotherfield, Buxted, and Crowborough: *Brighton Herald*, 20 November; *Sussex Advertiser*, 29 November; *Brighton Gazette*, 23 December (assize report); Prosecution Briefs prepared by the Treasury Solicitor in the case of the King vs. Richard Hodd and John Wickens alias Wicking, PRO TS 11/1007. The *Brighton Gazette* (18 November 1830) also reported a disturbance in the Uckfield area on the 15th to which troops were dispatched. This report however probably refers to the events in neighbouring Buxted.

¹³⁰ General Dalbiac, Battle, to Lord Fitzroy Somerset, 15 November 1830, Rev. George Mathews, Herstmonceaux, to Melbourne, 3 February 1831, PRO HO 52/10, ff.190-4 and 611-3; *Sussex Advertiser*, 22 November 1830.

¹³¹ Prosecution Briefs prepared by the Treasury Solicitor in the case of the King vs. William Standen, Stephen Eves, and Richard Cutbush, West Kent Epiphany Sessions 1831, PRO TS 11/943; Depositions of Giles Miller, solicitor, Goudhurst, Captain James William Hay, Cranbrook, Rev. Phillip Legigt, Marden, all 16 November 1830, CKS Q/SBw 124/1a, b and c.

¹³² *Times*, 25 November 1830.

the magistrates, where they stayed until late that night, but all to no avail.¹³³ It was business as usual in the parishes surrounding Frant. A party passed through Frant, having started in neighbouring Wadhurst, on their way to Rotherfield to destroy Mr. Cochrane's threshing machine, which he had promised to destroy when visited on the 12th, before again proceeding to Withyham with the intention to 'attack' Lord De La Warr's property and exacting a tithe reduction from Rev. Sackville Bale, before, again, going to Eridge Castle.¹³⁴ Cranbrook 'exhibited a scene of bustle, confusion, and anxiety, beyond precedent in the memory of the oldest inhabitants', occasioned by the several hundred people from the adjoining parishes summoned there by the magistrates to be sworn as Special Constables refusing to take the oath. The ensuing tumult even made it necessary to call for a detachment of soldiers from Maidstone to restore the peace.¹³⁵

Of greater concern than the sustained rebellion around Wadhurst was the spread of assemblages towards the hitherto unaffected eastern fringe of the Romney Marsh. The momentum generated in the Weald not only spilled westward but also back towards East Kent via the fringe of the Marsh.¹³⁶ East Kent had been in a state of comparative quietude since the destruction of threshing machines in the vicinity of Dover on 2 November and a fire the following night at Chartham, although several attacks were made against ploughs following both the earlier threats to destroy ploughs at Ash and the destruction of various farm implements of a Lenham farmer who had 'said something' about the (Elham) machine breakers.¹³⁷ Arson had been confined to areas that had previously been the focus of overt activity, namely the vicinities of Elham and Faversham. Even the open threat to a Waltham farmer that his newly acquired wood would be torched unless he increased his labourers' wages reinforced the earlier activities of machine breakers at neighbouring Crundale.¹³⁸

From mid November East Kent again became the focus of sustained overt activity. On the night of 13 November a large party of labouring men passed through Bridge 'shouting and uttering threats against some of the neighbouring farmers'. Tensions had been running high for several days since the dramatic 3am raid by several Bow Street officers and eight constables, 'armed with pistols, cutlasses, and crow-bars', to apprehend Taylor, a shoemaker who 'not being able to procure full employment... has occasionally gone to agricultural labour' and was suspected of being a ringleader in the machine

¹³³ *Brighton Gazette*, 18 November; *Times*, 19 November. Despite the strength of community feeling the boy was indicted at the Assizes. All but one of the six letters he sent were signed 'Syng': Indictment of John Pagden, labourer, Sussex Winter Assizes 1830, PRO Assi 94/2073.

¹³⁴ Major General Lord Fitzroy Somerset, Tunbridge Wells, to Peel, 16 November 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.16-7.

¹³⁵ *Kent Herald*, 18 November; *Maidstone Journal*, 23 November 1830.

¹³⁶ Gatherings had, as mentioned above, already occurred between Rye and Lydd.

¹³⁷ 1 at Westwell on the 8 November with 2 others in the preceding days: *Kent Herald*, 11 November; 3 at Eastchurch on Sheppy, 14 November: *Ibid.*, 18 November. *Maidstone Journal*, 2 November; *Maidstone Gazette*, 19 October; *Kent Herald*, 21 October 1830.

breaking at Bekesbourne.¹³⁹ The following evening a secular dispute over the attendance of the inmates of the Canterbury workhouse at Divine Service developed into a full-blown riot. On assembling in the workhouse yard, their assumed leader, a shoemaker, taunted the guardian by pointing at the gates and shouting aloud: 'There! You see those gates, they shall come open in spite of you. We mean to go out; no confinement for us'. On the doors being opened to allow some girls to go to church, the assembly made a successful rush to escape into the streets of Canterbury. The following evening Canterbury was again thrown into a state of confusion when the inmates again paraded the streets.¹⁴⁰

Wage assemblies recommenced in East Kent on 15 November. That morning about fourteen 'idle fellows' endeavoured to convince the 'agricultural population' of Fordwich and Sturry to strike from work; an attempt doomed to failure, according to the *Kentish Gazette*, for the labourers were 'in receipt of good pay and on the most friendly terms with their employers'. More successful were the 'strong party of countrymen' who visited several farms in the vicinity of Deal, pressing any labourers they found to assist in their attempt to increase wages to 2/6 a day. According to an undercover agent who in the course of the previous week had 'gone to the different Pot Houses in the villages [around Deal] disguised among the labourers...all their talk is about the wages, some give 1/8 per day, some 2/- some 2/3, all they say they want is 2/6 a day', something which he was sure the farmers were about to concede.¹⁴¹ The most sustained wage movement however was not an autonomous East Kent creation but something that spilled over from the Weald. Interconnected assemblages that morning at Biddenden, High Halden and Woodchurch extended to Ham Street (in Orlestone parish) from where the gang expressed their intention of proceeding to Ruckinge and Bilsington to compel the farmers to pay higher wages. That night two threshing machines were also broken in the area.¹⁴² Various farmers on Romney Marsh had already received letters warning them not to use their threshing machines again, and on the following morning (16 November) a gentleman in a carriage called at St. Mary-in-the-Marsh to enquire if any threshing machines were used. On being informed that 'one or two' machines were still in use, he was reported to say that there were 'not many days

¹³⁸ See Appendix 1.2 and Map 1.5. *Times*, 11 November 1830.

¹³⁹ *Kent Herald*, 18 November; *Times*, 11 November 1830.

¹⁴⁰ *Kentish Chronicle*, 16 November; *Kentish Gazette*, 19 November; *Maidstone Journal*, 23 November 1830.

¹⁴¹ *Kentish Gazette*, 16 November; *Kent Herald*, 18 November; D. Bishop, Deal to William Rowley, no date (between 10 and 12 November 1830), HO 52/8, ff.148-9.

¹⁴² Charles Willis (junior), Clerk to Cranbrook Magistrates to Peel, 15 November, HO 52/8, ff.174-5; *Maidstone Journal*, 23 November 1830. Cosway informed Knatchbull that arms had been sent to soldiers at Bilsington, Ruckinge and Bonnington, with Bilsington chosen as the rallying point. 'If during the night the farmers who may be patrolling, or the soldiers, see any collection of men they are to fire 2 muskets at an interval between each of 3 minutes which is a signal to assembled at Bilsington and one soldiers is immediately to be dispatched to that point with information'. Sir

longer' that they would work, before speeding off towards Hythe.¹⁴³ That morning the assemblage also reconvened at Ham Street and, upon having successfully 'regulated' the wages, departed for Ruckinge and Bilsington. However, at Ruckinge they were met by Mr. Deedes, a magistrate, a body of specials and a military detachment under the auspices of Captain White of the Staff Corps, who remonstrated with them on their conduct. Soon Sir William Cosway arrived and enquired of the crowd what they desired. Several men stepped forward to state that they wanted the wages raised, however another man came up close to Cosway 'with an attitude of defiance' and on becoming 'more and more violent' was seized by Cosway. On this the crowd attempted to rescue their comrade, knocking Cosway to his knees; in the affray another two men were also captured. The same party also visited Chart (which to get to they would have had to pass through Shadoxhurst) whilst some of their number went to Hawkhurst. So paranoid were the authorities that an attempt was going to be made that evening to release the prisoners now lodged in Hythe gaol and then flatten the whole building that an express was sent to Dover requiring the attendance of the military. At 8pm 100 soldiers arrived but all remained quiet. This attitude of open defiance continued on the 17th when the same gang reassembled at Ham Street, Ruckinge and Bilsington and were they were reportedly 'busily engaged in destroying the property of those who did not agree to their demands'. The *Times* correspondent even went as far as to state that they 'seem more determined than any [gang] we have yet heard of'.¹⁴⁴

IX

Despite the agitation on the fringes of the Romney Marsh, Swing in Kent reverted to its 'original' forms of machine breaking, threatening letters and arson. East Sussex, however, was subjected to wage assemblages until late November. An assemblage of 'nearly a 1,000' people from Hellingly and Horsebridge on 18 November were frustrated in their plan to visit Lord Gage at Firlie Place by a military detachment. The same day a scheme that had been hatched a few days previously to compel the collector of the assessed taxes at Crowhurst to return the money received to the farmers was partially enacted. Between 7 and 8am several labourers began to visit all the different farmers in both Crowhurst and neighbouring Hollington to find who had paid the taxes and to compel their labourers to

William Cosway, Bilsington to Knatchbull, no date except Tuesday 10pm (but 16 November 1830), CKS U951 C177/1.

¹⁴³ *Kentish Gazette*, 19 November 1830.

¹⁴⁴ 'They boldly declare their wants shall not be stopped by instruments of force; that they cannot endure themselves, - they have strong arms, - they have almost suffered to famish, whilst the rich have plenty of supplies, and the wants of the poor are never thought of': *Times*, 19 November; *Kentish Gazette*, 19 and 23 November; W. R. Cosway, Sandgate, to Peel, 17 November 1830, and enclosure, PRO HO 52/8, ff.2-7.

join them. However, the magistrates were informed of the assemblage and the indefatigable Sir Godfrey Webster with some troops left Battle immediately and prevented the tax collector from being molested. Equally unsuccessful was an attempt to force the Rector of Ewhurst to lower the tithes; the intimidated cleric absconded at 5am so as to avoid being followed.¹⁴⁵ The following day the populace of Rotherfield rose, again, 'in great numbers', and on being confronted by a combined civil and military force nearly unhorsed magistrate Mabbott and 'roughly handled' Lord Liverpool. The soldiers then rushed into the mob, on the instruction to fire if resisted, and seized several 'ringleaders'. A somewhat more conciliatory approach was taken by the Ore vestry where an assemblage of labourers had requested higher wages, a demand that was 'immediately acceded to'.¹⁴⁶

Successful assemblages that week at Barcombe and Cooksbridge prompted the farmers of Hamsey to meet on Saturday (20 November) to increase labourer's wages to prevent a 'rising of the peasantry', unlike those of Clayton where on the 23rd the labourers assembled to 'dictate wages'.¹⁴⁷ On 24 November assemblages occurred at Newick, where a hundred of the 'peasantry' gathered at an early hour 'in imitation of the neighbouring parishes',¹⁴⁸ and at Framfield, where a vestry meeting called for that day to discuss 'the circumstances of the times' prompted a large body of labourers, many of whom had been pressed under duress, to lobby for increased wages.¹⁴⁹ The final major assemblage occurred at Barcombe on 26 November where the labourers also successfully lobbied a farmers' meeting, the farmers consequently threatening the Minister that unless he cut the tithes

¹⁴⁵ *Hastings & Cinque Ports Iris*, 20 November; *Times*, 23 November; G. Courthope, Battle, 18 November (3 separate letters), PRO HO 52/10, first letter enclosing deposition of John Henry Birch, J.S. Hewett, Tunbridge Wells, 18 November 1830, to Peel, ff.415-6, 417, 418-9 and 52/8, ff. 54-55.

¹⁴⁶ *Times*, 25 November; *Hastings & Cinque Ports Iris*, 20 November. The Rotherfield meeting is also alluded to in the *Sussex Advertiser* (29 November). For the Ore riot also see Sir Howard Elphinstone, Ore Place, to William Smith, Gravesend, 25 November 1830, CKS U1127 C21.

¹⁴⁷ *Sussex Advertiser*, 22 November; *Times*, 25 November 1830.

¹⁴⁸ They proceeded to most of the farms demanding constant employment and an advance in their wages, pressing every labourer they met on their way. Their intention was to assemble on the Green in front of the Public House, but the magistrates intervened to prevent this. Instead they went to Newick Park they were met by Mr. Smith (agent to Mr. Slater) who advised them to disperse in a peaceable manner, saying he was about to make some resolution to ensure employment to all labourers under Slater's tenantry who might be out of work this ensuing winter. Many dispersed but a sizeable group returned to the village where they met Mr. Frankland, a magistrate, who, supported by 5 or 6 specials, remonstrated with them on the illegality of their proceedings and requested to know their intentions. On being informed that they desired an increase in wages Frankland asserted that no such concession would be made under intimidation, but that if their complaints were properly represented they would be considered. A meeting was proposed for Friday at which 'three of the most intelligent of their body' would be deputed to meet the farmers and the resident gentry. This was 'cheerfully acceded' and successfully undertaken. *Sussex Advertiser*, 29 November 1830.

¹⁴⁹ Prosecution Briefs prepared by the Treasury Solicitor in the case of the King vs. William Martin, Michael Brooker and Benjamin Evans, Sussex Winter Assizes, PRO TS 11/1007; *Brighton Gazette*, 23 December 1830.

‘there would be a breach of the peace’, although three days later a peaceable crowd of 100 labourers did gather at the West Hoathly tithe audit¹⁵⁰

Increasingly, though, ‘Swing’ generated fear through a resort to arson and threatening letters, although assaults on a constable attempting to apprehend a prisoner at Alfriston and upon the nightly watch at Hastings in the final week of November did provoke alarm.¹⁵¹ The incidence of arson, as calculated on a weekly basis (Monday to Sunday), had peaked at eight cases between 8 and 14 November, fallen to four cases the following week as assemblages became widespread through East Sussex and had risen to seven cases from 22 November as assemblages in East Sussex became a less regular occurrence. Moreover, from 18 November until the end of December all but three of the sixteen cases of arson in East Sussex were clustered in the downland strip stretching from Hastings to Newhaven on the coast and inland to the foot of the Downs at Hellingly.¹⁵² Ironically the inspiration for at least four of these cases seems to have been agitators hell-bent on maintaining revolutionary pressure through overt action. Charles Inskipp, although a native of Battle, had been a member of the hated London ‘New Police’. However, upon the London disturbances in early November, which prevented the King from visiting the City, he had ‘thrown off his coat and joined the Mob’. By mid-November he had arrived back in Battle where, upon taking lodgings, he began to discuss the government and ‘the disturbances’ with anyone, whether they showed an interest or not. At noon on 22nd, the day of the Battle fair, Inskipp began to address those gathered in a new Beershop upon the disturbances and the revolution in France, stating that if they were like him they would ‘fight for their rights at once’, and as he ‘didn’t value his life one farthing’ he would head them and teach them to fight for there ‘would be a revolution here’. Four days after his speech Mr. Quaife at Battle was targeted by arsonists for the second time that month, and within a fortnight of Inskipp’s harangue a further three incendiary fires occurred in Battle alone.¹⁵³

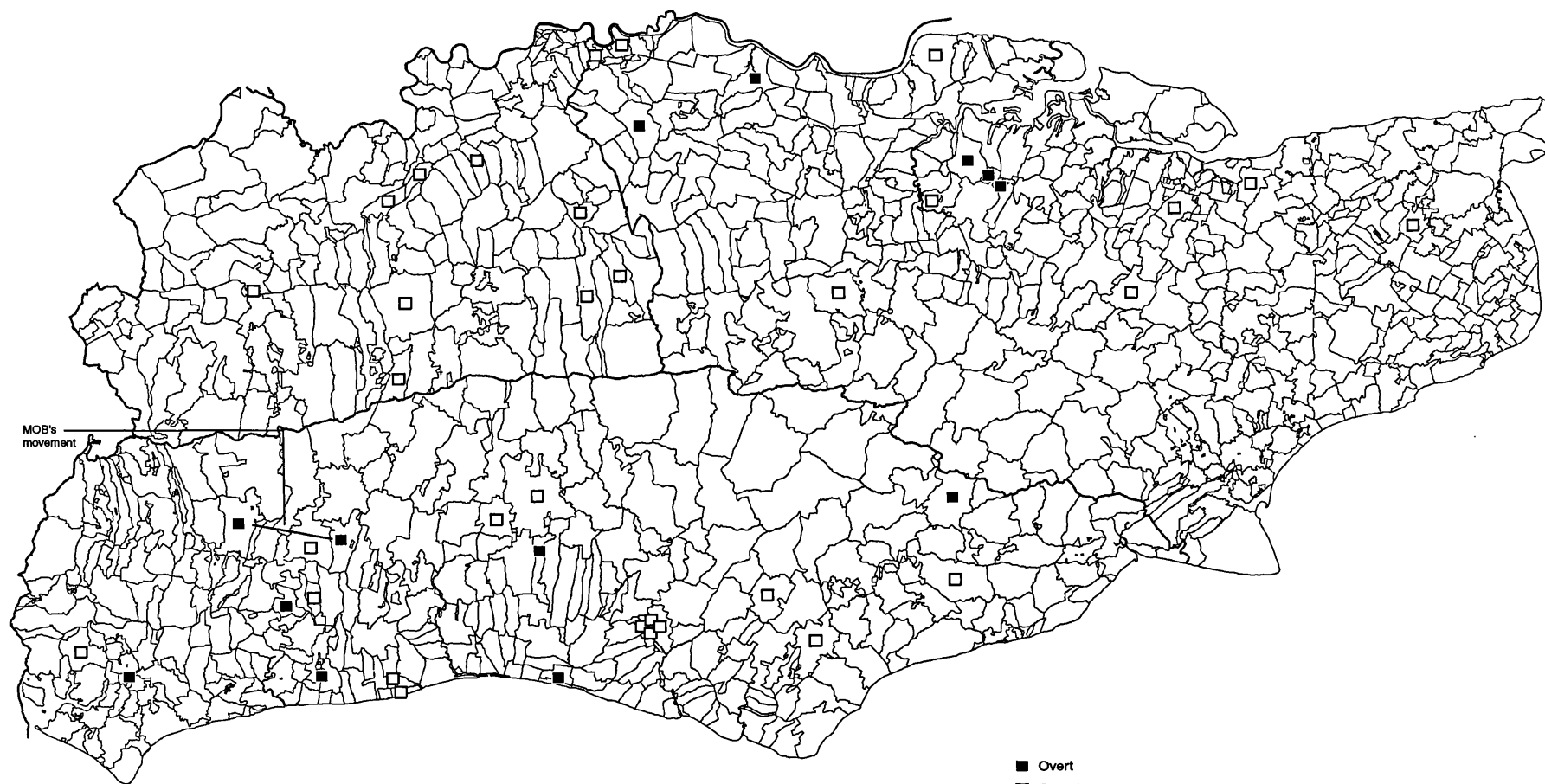
¹⁵⁰ Rev. Robert Allen, Barcombe Rectory, to Melbourne, 15 February 1831, PRO HO 5/15, ff.11-2; *Brighton Gazette*, 2 December 1830.

¹⁵¹ Those involved in the rescue at Alfriston had blackened faces and were said to be smugglers. Moreover the whole population was allegedly cognizant. Sergeant D’Ayly, 11 Argyll Street, London to Melbourne, 2 December (evening), PRO HO 52/10, ff.597-8; *Sussex Advertiser*, 29 November. William Pearson, an Alfriston labourer, was later found not guilty of the assault at the Assizes: Indictment of William Pearson, Sussex Winter Assizes 1830, PRO Assi 94/2073. For the Hastings attack see: *Brighton Gazette*, 2 December 1830.

¹⁵² For details of individual incendiary fires see Appendix 1.2.

¹⁵³ Battle Post Office Deputy, 26 November, Battle Post Office, 27 November and 1 December, to Freeling, Clerks to the Battle Bench, 26 November, Thomas Bellingham, 2 and 3 December, to Melbourne, PRO HO 52/10, ff. 430, 435-6, 437, 431-2, 440-3 and 444; Prosecution Briefs prepared by the Treasury Solicitor in the case of the King vs. Charles Inskipp, Sussex Winter Assizes, PRO TS 11/1007; *Brighton Gazette*, 23 December 1830 (assize reports).

Map 1.6: Swing Protests, 1 to 31 December 1830



Further evidence of a campaign by provincial and metropolitan radicals to promote revolutionary fervour in the East Sussex countryside abounds. James Taylor, like Inskipp, was a native of East Sussex and had until late October been engaged as an apprentice in London. Suspicions as to Taylor's radical connections, and therefore his motives for returning to rural Sussex, were aroused when he showed a letter he had in his possession to Joseph Fielder, the Salehurst farmer who in early November fell victim to an incendiary fire (see figure 3.1).¹⁵⁴

Figure 3.1

I am glad to hear that you continue to pass without suspicion & and that you have accomplished your design so far so well at Battel & Bexhill & those other places ware you have been. I now advise you to continue the same course as you have been following. I think your apearance as a common working man is decidedly the best in a general way accept when you go from place to place & to bear all the fires in a common workenman dress is not a bad plan for then you hear what the people say & Gentalmen to & then you learn what Gentalmen are doing at ther own places & as people come from all Quarters you pass amongst others as Strangers so that there is no fear but carrey Nothing with you Lest you should be taken. The system of burning seems to work well we have gained all ready by its effects be carefull as to whose you burn do not burn the all of a poor man. Give Sir Godfrey [Webster] some more if you can on your return. Thare is Mr. Micklethwaite at hurstgreen ware the man in a brown hat was in the way burn that if you can they are all quiet now. Thare is Mr. Fielder at Robertsbridge that you tried at before burn it to the ground thay are Quiet there now there is M. Luxford give him another wile. There is Mr. Smith at Vinehall I think it is – Burn all he has if you can git at it its near the road. There are several more Mr. Wetherall Mr. Snapp I have sent you 25 balls 10 of the 24 – 10 of the 12 % of the 6 the barer [bearer] is the Man that has been to Lewes & Eastbourn & other places in that nabououd – send me word how you git on & be Faithfull. Great baits are laid by Government but its of no use if you will remain faithfull to your agreement Let not money be your whaut I shall be in Battel soon I will meet you at the place ware the barer meets you. I know not that I can say any more at present.

On 19 November two men were apprehended for circulating radical handbills in the vicinity of Lewes, the same day that two men were arrested at Glynde for making enquiries to the servants of the nationally-renowned Southdown sheep farmer John Ellman. Two men travelling in a gig who had made enquiries of labourers in the Uckfield area were believed to be a Beershop keeper and occasional preacher and a journeyman carpenter, both of Lewes. The Beershop keeper was apprehended and, whilst there was no evidence that he was one of the travelling agitators, he was fined £10 for allowing persons to remain drinking in his house throughout the night.¹⁵⁵ Labourers and servants on other farms were also imposed upon by strangers enquiring as to their masters' use of machinery, with suspicions over mobile radical figures raised further when East Dean farmer Richard

¹⁵⁴ Tomas Charles Bellingham, Battle, to Melbourne, 2 December 1830, enclosing Taylor's letter, PRO HO 52/10, ff.440-3.

¹⁵⁵ The drinking party was a group of journeymen tailors, supposedly 'very active in promoting discontent and tumult'. Lewes Magistrates to Melbourne, 30 November, enclosing Informations of William Kenward, Uckfield; James Catt, Little Horsted; John Batchelor, South Malling; and, John Jenner, Uckfield, all 27 November 1830, PRO HO 52/10, ff.589-593.

Scrase's barn containing a threshing machine was fired. Farmer Saxby at Berwick had also received two letters threatening that if he did not destroy his threshing machine his stacks would be fired, a threat carried out on the 25 November.¹⁵⁶ Suspicions as to the involvement of mobile figures were also behind the apprehension in early December of two men who had travelled from London, on 'strong evidence' that they had fired a hovel at Heighton, near Newhaven, on 28 November. In the last week of November four farmers in the neighbourhood of Seaford received threatening letters, all in the same hand and written on the same paper, and bearing the Brighton postmark 'where much mischief has emanated from'.¹⁵⁷ Suspicions as to the involvement of Brighton radicals had already been raised when on the night of 18 November an attempt was made to break into the ammunition store of the Brighton barracks with the plan to steal 'eight 6 pounders' from the battery. Despite the seriousness of the attempt, the Brighton authorities made little reaction, infuriating one correspondent to the Home Office who claimed that effectively there was *no* authority at Brighton.¹⁵⁸

X

The final week of November effectively saw the end to mass assemblages in Surrey and West Sussex. At Henfield a group of labourers gathered early on the morning of 24 November and dispatched emissaries to procure the assistance of as many labourers as possible, before meeting the farmers at noon upon which their 'little difference' was easily accommodated. On this successful conclusion, a group of labourers from neighbouring Woodmancote promptly left on being promised that their 'wants should meet the best intentions of their employers'. Other assemblages on 24 and 25 November were equally good natured: 30 labourers gathered at Treyford and disbanded without mischief; assemblages at Shermanbury and Slinfold had their demands assented to; at Kirdford and Wisborough Green, seemingly in a state of perpetual upheaval, several labourers were pressed before descending upon Petworth to demand the Earl of Egremont increased their

¹⁵⁶ *Sussex Advertiser*, 29 November; Rev. Sir C Farnaley, Wickham Rectory, nr Bromley, to Melbourne, 29 November, PRO HO 52/8, ff.318-9. *Times*, 27 November; *Hastings & Cinque Ports Iris*, 27 November 1830.

¹⁵⁷ Charles Verall, Seaford, 30 November, Lewes Bench, 3 December 1830, to Melbourne, PRO HO 52/10, ff.324-5 and 603-4

¹⁵⁸ Brighton Ordnance Office, to Peel, 23 November, plus enclosures, Mr. Dinninar, Brighton, to Sir H. Taylor. G.C.H. (forwarded to Home Office), 25 November, PRO HO 52/10, ff.307-11 and 317-22; *Times*, 20 November. Such fears were given further credence. On 26 November an (aborted) attempt was made to break into the office of the guardians of the poor. In early December a riotous assemblage gathered in front of the office of the Brighton guardians of the poor and in effecting a general rush to get into the office broke several windows. The result was that as there was no

wages; whilst 100 labourers from Limpsfield marched to Oxted but offered no resistance when met by the magistrates.¹⁵⁹

After the wave of intense overt activity had quickly swept through West Sussex and Surrey, arson and threatening letters again became 'Swing's' most visible form. A threatening letter received by a Broadwater gentlemen showed that these acts were to reinforce the earlier work, particularly pressing considering the onset of winter had in recent years lead to mass lay-offs of field labourers:

I have heard of you damed conduct in Worthing you dirty rouge [if you] could not sleep at night I suppose your conscience (if you have any)... tormented you. This is to show you that it is in my powr to set your house in flames and it shall be done on Friday next if you do not mend. Swing¹⁶⁰

Moreover, these acts all occurred in areas that had been visited by assemblages, or in the case of the areas around Cheam and Egham had been recently targeted by incendiaries.¹⁶¹ The importance of these covert acts, however, should not hide the fact that occasionally overt tactics were still resorted to. Kirdford rose (again) on 30 November with the expressed intention of getting 'the same as other places had got', even inciting disturbance at neighbouring Wisborough Green where the labourers were now 'very well satisfied'.¹⁶² On 4 December a group of West Chiltington labourers working on the parish roads marched to the Petworth Bench to complain that the parish had reneged on the local agreements. On their return to work the next day, they attempted to claim that the Bench had promised higher wages than it actually had done and threatened the surveyor in order to enforce their spurious claim, the same day as which a labourer assaulted the Angmering constable whilst exercising his duty. This feeling of betrayal was also manifest in an attack, rather appropriately on Boxing Day, on a special constable at Amberley. The common strand of these overt acts was, like the covert acts, their attempt(s) to uphold and enforce the new worker-imposed and decidedly *working-class* theory of value.¹⁶³

organised civil force in Brighton the guardians were intimidated into raising the wages of those employed by the parish. *Ibid.*, 27 November and 10 December 1830.

¹⁵⁹ 25 November, WSCRO MP 1979; *Brighton Gazette*, 25 November; *Sussex Advertiser*, 29 November and 6 December; Letter to Richmond, 24 November, WSCRO Goodwood 1477A R3; Indictments of Thomas Puttock and Thomas Cooper, labourers, WSCRO QR/Q 51; *Hampshire Telegraph*, 4 December; Deposition of George Duncton, labourer, 30 November, WSCRO QR/W/758 f.274; Godstone Postmaster, to Freeling, 26 November 1830, PRO HO 52/10, f.233.

¹⁶⁰ See Appendix 1.2. Indictment of James Findel Boniface, labourer, Sussex Winter Assizes 1830, PRO Assi 94/2073; *Brighton Gazette*, 23 December 1830.

¹⁶¹ See Appendix 1.2 and Map 1.5 and 1.6.

¹⁶² *Hampshire Telegraph*, 4 December; *Sussex Advertiser*, 6 December; Informations of Richard Gopatcher, farmer, and Richard Hasler, magistrate, both 30 November 1830, WSCRO QR/W/758 f.273.

¹⁶³ Informations of Timothy Town, West Chiltington, yeoman and surveyor, 18 December, William Mates, labourer, 6 December, Examinations of John Pennicott, tailor, William Searle, labourer, Robert Braby, cordwainer, all 27 December, WSCRO QR/W/758 ff.280, 269, 270, 271 and 272. The

XIII

After the dramatic but brief flare of activity on the fringe of Romney Marsh in mid November, outbreaks of overt activity in Kent were few and far between. An assemblage who gathered at Herne on 18 November and proceeded to the farm of Mr. Sladden were thwarted in their attempts to destroy his threshing machine. A few days later Mr. Harrison, a neighbouring farmer, had a notice attached to his premises demanding he stop using his threshing machine: through fear of reprisals Harrison obeyed. The aggravation caused by the frustrated visit to Sladden's was released on the night of 20 November when, as Harrison and Sladden accompanied each other on the parochial watch, they were shot at by some person(s) hiding behind a hedge. The other non-Thanet disturbances all occurred in north-west Kent.¹⁶⁴ At Wrotham between 400 and 500 labouring people gathered at the mansion of the Rector and, to cries of 'Bread or Blood', demanded he cut his tithes to allow the farmers to increase their meagre wages. This demand was met by the defiant claim that he 'would rather submit to be hanged on the first tree, than accede to such violent proceedings'. Despite both sides being so deeply entrenched, they eventually agreed to go along to the vestry where the farmers were meeting. However, on their arrival the embittered labourers took hold of the assistant overseer, placed him in a cart and wheeled him to the edge of the parish, where they warned him that he must resign his position.¹⁶⁵ On 29 November assemblages occurred at Meopham, where the labourers called at different farms compelling those at work to join them before proceeding to Cobham Hall, and at Bredhurst where 100 woodmen marched to Rainham to 'seek an increase in their rate of pay'. Woodmen in a parish 'adjoining Bredhurst' also struck to increase their piece rates, but were sacked by their employer, and employers in the vicinities of Bredhurst and Chatham who had agreed to increase piece rates had by early December reneged on their

alternative political agenda of 'Swing' was clearly evident in a meeting held at Chichester on 15 December to petition parliament for a radical reform and against malt and other taxes. The radical petition carried at the meeting deeply rankled the anti-radical faction, who in turn defiantly placed their petition for signatures alongside the endorsed petition. Clearly despite the success of 'Swing' and its fuelling of popular radicalism many provincial figures were prepared to dogmatically stand against the tide and risk the possibility of reprisals. Letter to Richmond, 16 December 1830, WSCRO Goodwood 1477a R12.

¹⁶⁴ *Kentish Gazette*, 23 November; *Times*, 23 December. An assemblage intending to force an increase in wages was expected on 19 November at Lenham. For whatever reason nothing occurred. George Douglas, Chilston, nr. Maidstone to Peel, 17 November, PRO HO 52/8, f.8. At Chilham the farmers had resolved before the tithe audit to force a reduction of 20% in the small tithes, this not being accepted the farmers refused to pay anything. Farmers in other parishes were reported to be considering adopting the same strategy. *Kent Herald*, 25 November 1830.

¹⁶⁵ Camden, Wilderness, to Melbourne, 28 November, PRO HO 52/8, ff.237-8; *Times*, 29 November; *Rochester Gazette*, 30 November; *Kent Herald*, 2 December 1830.

promise.¹⁶⁶ A further assemblage that week at Sevenoaks (an attempt to force a tithe reduction) raised the fear of a muted assemblage at Dartford, a part of Kent that had remained free of the gatherings that had occurred elsewhere. Captain Cator, a local magistrate, just wanted 'to be prepared': no gatherings occurred, though.¹⁶⁷

The last sustained campaign of machine breaking occurred on the Isle of Thanet. On 15 November magistrate George Hannam's Minster farm had been targeted by incendiaries, a fire that was clearly interpreted as a warning against the use of threshing machines. Mr. Hills-Rowe, a farmer in neighbouring Margate, stopped using his machine and placed it in a chalk pit preparatory to its destruction. News of Hills-Rowe's actions quickly spread throughout Thanet, and on the night of Saturday 20 November a gang of labourers, artisans, sailors and tradesmen, after visiting several beershops and public houses, descended on Hills-Rowe's farm and destroyed the machine.¹⁶⁸ Two nights later they visited Hannam, who in readiness had stationed thirty special constables under the coordination of George Leadbitter, the Bow Street policeman employed at Elham. However, their arrival still caught Hannam off-guard and before he could intervene they started to destroy the first threshing machine. Leadbitter grabbed one of the machine breakers but the gang effected a rescue and in the process struck Leadbitter on the leg. Hannam raising his voice also received a blow to his collarbone whilst another man struck the lantern he was holding, outraging Hannam who threatened to shoot them all with his pistol. The intervention of Leadbitter stopped a massacre, despite the gang's further provocation: if Hannam fired they would fire his stacks, but that he might as well 'shoot [as] he could not shoot them all'. Fearlessly the gang then destroyed a second machine, the wheels of a chaff cutter, a bean mill, malt mill, and a wheat mill (all made of offensive steel) before demanding the keys to a barn, again threatening that they would set fire to the premises if refused. Instead, they broke down both barn doors where a further two threshing machines were stored, both of which were soon in pieces before victoriously giving three cheers and departing across the fields.¹⁶⁹

John Boys, the unrelenting clerk to the Margate Bench, now feared that threshing machines at Birchington, Minster, and Monkton were also vulnerable to attack. His fears

¹⁶⁶ *Rochester Gazette*, 30 November; J. Bradley Esq, Gore Court, Sittingbourne, to Melbourne, 1 December, PRO HO 52/8, ff.95-6; *Kent Herald*, 9 December; *Kentish Gazette*, 10 December 1830.

¹⁶⁷ General Dalbiac, Maidstone, to Phillips, 2 December, Major General G. Fisher, Woolwich, to Lord Downes, 3 December, enclosing, Captain B. Cator, Dartford, to Commander at Woolwich, 2 December 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.134-5 and 199-202.

¹⁶⁸ *Kentish Gazette*, 26 November and 29 December 1830; Various examinations and notes, CKS DO/JS/g/3, bundle 1

¹⁶⁹ John Boys, clerk to Margate Bench to Maule, 23 November; R. Cobb Esq, Solicitor, Margate to Melbourne, enclosing deposition of William Liley, waggoner, both 28 November, PRO HO 52/8, ff.33-4 and 97-9. Prosecution Briefs for the King vs. George Moore, James Dunk, James Pointer and

were confirmed on 24 November when 46 men, some in 'female attire', regrouped under the lead of the self-styled General Moore and destroyed a further six threshing machines on six different farms throughout the night. Their motives are unclear, though the fearlessness that the gang had previously shown suggests disguise to avoid identification is unlikely. The invocation of the carnivalesque on what was a momentous day seems far more likely.¹⁷⁰ This considerable outing proved to be the gang's last: reports that they were to reassemble at Margate on the following Saturday night (27 November) to pull-down the workhouse proved unfounded.¹⁷¹

The activities of the Thanet gang coincided with a renewed resort to arson, not least in the environs of Faversham, those helping to extinguish the flames on a Boughton Aluph farm demanding that the threshing machine, which had 'caused much consternation amongst peasantry', be taken to pieces, the farmer instantly complying. Farmers in 'every village near Canterbury' and in Thanet were reported to have been bombarded with Swing letters threatening destruction to their premises if they yielded to the demands of tithe collectors. Farmers in other parts of Kent also received threatening letters, but that letters were also sent to factory owners in Kentish London, warning that 700 men were ready to march from Sevenoaks to destroy all the machinery they found, and to the 'Heads of Government departments' at Chatham, suggests the involvement of national radicals attempting to expand Swing's remit.¹⁷²

This flurry of post-(intense)overt activity was short lived. By the final week of November the frequency of both incendiary fires and threatening letters had considerably diminished: through December only seven incendiary fires occurred in Kent. There were still ominous signs, though. The fire on the farm of Mr. Arnold at Aylesford, near Maidstone was preceded by the receipt of a letter a day before giving notice that on the following night his premises would be fired and a mysterious letter calling on the labourers to meet the following day. The fear of fires still ruled, a contemporary writer claiming that 'scarcely a night passed without the citizens of Canterbury being startled by messengers riding into the place at full speed to summon the assistance of the fire-engines'. Many of these, though, were false alarms: 'these are not the times to indulge in such fooleries'

George Hollands, Kent Winter Assizes 1830; Evidence of George Hannam Esq, John Forster, James Pointer, and George Hollands, PRO TS 11/943.

¹⁷⁰ John Boys, Margate to Phillips, 26 November, PRO HO 52/8, ff.77-8; *Rochester Gazette*, 30 November. The *Kent Herald* (2 December 1830) claimed that three other machines were broken the night before; that the paper did not report the events on Hannam's farm, and that no other source, not least Boys' detailed correspondences, refers to other machines being destroyed, it seems likely their report is not 100% accurate.

¹⁷¹ John Boys, Margate to Phillips, 26 November 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.77-8

¹⁷² *Kentish Gazette*, 22 November and 7 December; *Maidstone Journal*, 23 November; *Times*, 29 November and 2 December 1830.

warned the *Sussex Advertiser*.¹⁷³ An epitaph written after the firing of a gentleman's 'occasional and summer retreat cottage' - a blatant act of class hostility - perfectly captured the sense that 'Swing' had erased any barriers to class war. Rural England now lay battered and violated.

No more the merry dance is wove
By country youths or village maids:
No more is heard the voice of love
Within the cot of flowery Cades.

The ruffian's rude and barbarous hand
Proclaim'd destruction's ruthless power;
He fired thee with the deadly brand
One dark *December's nightly hour*.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ See Appendix 1.2. *Rochester Gazette*, 6 December; *Kentish Gazette*, 7 December; *Sussex Advertiser*, 29 November 1830; R. Stanley (ed.) *Passage from The Autobiography of a 'Man of Kent'* (Paris, 1866), p.53..

¹⁷⁴ William Henry Prideaux, 'To Cades Moss-House', in A. Percival (ed.), *An Anthology of Faversham Verse 1430 – 1998* (Faversham, 1999), p.37. The poem was first published in 1832 as part of Prideaux's volume of poetry, *Fancy's Wreath*.

Chapter 4: 'I have suffered my property by the inefficiency of the local authorities to keep order and property inviolate'¹: The Reaction of the Authorities to Swing

I

[I]t seems likely that, in Kent at least, the disturbances would not have lasted as long, and subsequently spread with such momentum into other counties, if the government had the means, and the farmers and justices the means or the will, to check them.

Despite the fact that *Captain Swing* was first published over 30 years ago, little work since has seriously challenged its interpretation of local and central government's initial responses to Swing. Indeed, only Roger Wells has significantly added to and revised our understanding of Swing's repression.² The analysis in *Captain Swing* promoted the thesis that, despite Peel's apparent disgust at the sentences passed by Knatchbull against the first Kentish machine breakers, it was the outbreak of 'riots' in the Kent and Sussex Weald in early November that provoked Peel into taking 'positive action'. Even then it was not until the election of Lord Grey's Whig government, and the installation of Lord Melbourne as Home Secretary on 23 November, that central government resolutely intervened in the suppression of the disturbances.³ This lack of intervention, it was claimed, was responsible for the spread of Swing from East Kent through the Weald and then into the whole of rural Southern and Central England.

This chapter, whilst supporting Roger Wells' thesis that 'no fundamental policy change derived from Grey's ministry's replacement of Wellington's',⁴ also contends that it was the trial of the Elham men itself and the intensification of machine breaking in the Wingham area, from the 23 October, the day after the trial, that heralded a much stronger government response to Swing, not the later 'risings' in the Weald, nor the installation of Melbourne as Home Secretary. Between the time of the first Swing trial and the installation of Melbourne, Swing had already spread beyond not only Kent but also beyond the south-east, Swing had already passed its peak.⁵ Rather, Peel's resolve was stiffened in response to the events of the

¹ Edward Hughes, Smeeth Hill House, Smeeth to Home Office, 23 September 1830, PRO HO 44/21, ff.263-4.

² Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p.253; Wells, 'Mr. William Cobbett'. For a re-interpretation of the response of the local gentry to events outside of Swing's initial theatre see: Randall and Newman, 'Protest, Proletarians and Paternalists', pp.205-227.

³ Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, pp.254 and 256.

⁴ Wells, 'Mr. William Cobbett', p.37.

⁵ See Chapter 5.

few days after the trial, his resort to intervention more intense and his advice more prescriptive.

Despite the importance attached to the alleged non-intervention of the local and national judiciary against the first outbreak of Swing, the important events leading up to the first Swing trial have received scanty attention. The analysis advanced in *Captain Swing* was thus: the peace time restructuring of both the military and pseudo-military forces, most notably the yeomanry, allied with the fear of committing 'more than a skeletal force against the labourers [considering] the political developments in France and Belgium and the rumbling discontent and agitation in the large industrial towns' rendered Wellington's already unpopular Tory administration 'incapable of dealing swiftly and effectively with the rural outbreaks in Kent and Surrey'.⁶ This analysis, however, fails to appreciate the complexity of local responses and underestimates the Government's actual role. Wellington's Government was already active in the suppression of Swing before the first trial, both through the sanctioning of the involvement of George Leadbitter, an experienced Bow Street detective, and through advising on how to *apply the law*. Peel's irritation at the leniency of the magistrates in applying the law and their ineffectiveness at bringing others to trial conditioned his intensified post-trial intervention, clearly manifest in his dispatch of no less-a-figure than George Maule, the Treasury Solicitor, to coordinate the repression in Kent.⁷ Besides commenting on Peel's disdain of Knatchbull's actions and Melbourne's dismay at local magistrates who capitulated to the 'mob's' demands, Hobsbawm and Rudé do not give the impression that the actions of both the local authorities and central government were the product of a negotiation.⁸ Whilst the local forces of law and order loosely framed their policies in the context of statute law, they were dependent on local contingencies (which provided the context to the event, personalities) and the often odd juxtapositions created by the unfolding of events.⁹

At a meeting of Kent justices on 1 November Knatchbull disclosed to Maule that the sentences could not have been otherwise under circumstances he was not at liberty to

⁶ Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, pp. 253-4.

⁷ Peel barely manages to disguise his dismay at Knatchbull's actions in this letter of 25 October (1830) to Lord Camden: 'I should have thought a severe example in the case of Destruction of farming property would have had a much greater effect – than the unparalleled lenity shown to the Destroyers of Thrashing Machines', CKS U840, C250/10/6. Although Maule is referred to in passing by Hobsbawm and Rudé (*Captain Swing*, p. 220) it is Roger Wells ('Mr. William Cobbett') who has brought to prominence Maule's role.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 254 and 257.

⁹ A. Charlesworth, 'From the moral economy of Devon', pp.205-218.

disclose.¹⁰ This chapter therefore seeks to shed light on Knatchbull's enigmatic behaviour through the unravelling of a series of complex events in and around the Elham area before the Canterbury trial. What follows is an attempt to consider the complex interaction between the law and its enforcement in the suppression of Swing in its initial arenas.

II: *The Reaction to the Sevenoaks Fires*

The outbreaks of intensive protest in East and West Kent occurred more or less simultaneously, both provoking (almost) instantaneous, although very different, response. The rash of incendiary fires around Orpington during the early summer immediately prompted the offer of a £100 reward, which was used to lever the services of a London police officer and a pardon from the Home Office. Phillip Porter, a wheelwright's apprentice, was soon apprehended on suspicion, and committed to trial at the Kent Summer Assizes for both Mosyer's and Voules' fires. The trial, though, collapsed on the grounds of unreliable evidence.¹¹

The post-trial intensification of incendiarism provoked varying responses. It was not until the fourth incendiary fire on the premises of Jonathon Thompson, a county magistrate, that any request was made to the Home Office, exactly four weeks after his first fire, and this by the County Fire Office (successfully) calling for an addition to their offer of a £100 reward. Three days later Mr. Manning, a local magistrate, informed the Home Office that another fire had occurred and believed he was the next target. Clearly exasperated with the unsuccessful offer of rewards and pardons, Manning insisted that some 'effectual measures' were needed to stop the attacks. Manning's barbed missives led to him being summoned to meet an anonymous Whitehall clerk. Their 'long conversation' established that the fear generated by the frequent fires would partially be overcome by a billeting of a Bow Street officer. This was only assented to, though, since Manning had promised that the local magistrates would hold a meeting to discuss the developing crisis.¹² The resultant meeting held on 11 September resolved that an association for the 'detection of incendiaries and the protection of property' be established, the first such society in the south-east. The plan was to set up a subscription to

¹⁰ Maule, Maidstone, to Phillips, 1 November 1830, PRO HO 40/27, f.54.

¹¹ Joseph Berens, Kevington, Fooks Cray, 8 June, Bromley Bench, 9 June, to Peel, PRO HO 52/8, ff.231-3 and 89-90; *London Gazette*, 11 June; *Maidstone Gazette*, 10 August 1830. Also see chapter 3 for an account of the trial.

fund a sub-committee in every parish in the division, each responsible to a central committee. The association was also promised that it had been intimated that Peel had negotiated the offer of a pardon in all cases of arson in their jurisdiction.¹³

The day-to-day machinations of the Sevenoaks authorities are in comparison sparsely detailed. In mid September two people were suddenly arrested at Maresfield, in the Sussex Weald, on suspicion of being the Sevenoaks incendiaries. William Day, the magistrate responsible for their apprehension, immediately informed the Sevenoaks Bench, who then (unsuccessfully) wrote to the Home Office to request the dispatch of a police officer to assist Day. The police officer dispatched to investigate Minet's fire had returned to London after a very brief sojourn due to a lack of evidence.¹⁴ Such visible failures combined with the invisible actions of the local magistracy tended to generate hostility towards the authorities, not least from the victims of the incendiaries. Mr. Nourville ignored the threats in a letter he received, that his house would be set on fire if he left home, by going in person to the Home Office get a military force. Mr. Sandford of Farningham was quick to predict that, as 'the Magistrates seem paralyzed – and village constables are afraid to act', if the Government didn't 'take the lead and sanction the arming of the Bourgeois classes', the vacuum of authority would soon be filled with illegal associations for the protection of property, 'especially with the example of the Continent before their eyes'.¹⁵

Despite the refusal to send a Police officer to assist Day, his enquiries continued. On 21 October, Day informed Peel that Charles Blow, a vagrant, and Mary Ann Johnson, a ten year-old girl 'of intelligence and cunning far beyond her age', had been committed to Lewes House of Correction as rogues and vagabonds for three months, for, despite strong suspicions against Blow, the evidence was not sufficient to warrant a commitment for arson. Day believed that Johnson had used her extensive knowledge of several of the fires, including Minet's and Harvey's, to turn 'the full weight of her Evidence against Blow to shield her father and mother' who were, Day alleged, the principal perpetrators. On this suspicion Day apprehended the girls' parents and an older daughter, all of whom were summarily committed as vagrants. A

¹² Managing Director of the County Fire Office, Regent Street, 31 August, Mr. Manning, New Bank Buildings, 3 September, Unnamed Clerk, Whitehall, 3 September 1830, to Peel, PRO HO 52/8, ff.313, 259-60 and 261-2.

¹³ *Maidstone Journal*, 14 September; Unnamed Clerk, Whitehall, to Peel, 3 September 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.261-2.

¹⁴ Lower Division of the Lathe of Sutton at Hone Magistrates, Sevenoaks to Peel, 18 September, PRO HO 52/8, f.270; *Times*, 8 September 1830.

¹⁵ *Times*, 17 September; B. Sandford, Farningham, Dartford to John Irving MP, 8 Oct 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.203-5.

witness also came forward and recounted a conversation he had with Blow, who had apparently said that the fires were the work of 'a gang of wanderers' and that he had been to seven of them, but more were yet to occur. Day, unsure as to what step to take next, asked Peel if a pardon could be offered and if the prisoners could be transferred to Bow Street to be interrogated there. The resounding answer was no: a pardon was ineffectual before any confessions were extracted and might lead to the 'most guilty' party escaping without punishment. Moreover, even the Home Secretary did not have the powers to remove prisoners already committed, and that, even if he, did magistrates at Bow Street had no jurisdiction over matters in Sussex. Day had best enrol the help of other local magistrates not least those from Kent and Surrey. This 'advise' was partly premised on the knowledge that the Surrey magistrates had also just apprehended a man on suspicion of being the, or at least one of the, incendiary(s).¹⁶

On Wednesday 20 October a man named John Blakey was apprehended after having earlier that day displayed a 'weapon' in an Oxted pub, which he foolishly described as being able to fire agricultural property. He was also found to be carrying shot, bullets and receipts for various different combustible compounds, as well as many political writings which predicted revolution, some of his own creation. Peel, on being informed, sanctioned the sending of a police officer to Surrey in order to promote his belief that 'it is of so much importance that there should be a concert and unity of action in the attempt to unravel the mystery of the fires'. It transpired that two Union Hall Police officers were actually sent, Chief Constable Hall and officer Curtis. On examination Blakey claimed that, after writing an unprofitable book on 'physic', he had worked in the brickfields of Liverpool before descending upon London to take up a new career as a hawker of 'prophetic writings'. This career change not proving to be financially rewarding, he determined to walk into the country to exhibit a harpoon and other inventions of his own design, making his way to Oxted via Woolwich and Deptford. The offending implement was a brass device intended to launch harpoons, an invention Blakey believed would be of invaluable help in the whaling fisheries. Another invention was said to be a device by which officers in battle could launch small shells amongst the enemy. On further questioning, the inscrutable Blakey denied all knowledge of the fires, but was still detained. Several of the Kentish victims arrived in a last ditch attempt to procure the necessary evidence

¹⁶ Copies of letters from William Day, Maresfield, to Peel, 21 October, and, Phillips, Whitehall, to Day, 22 October, CKS U840 C250 10/4 and 5. *Maidstone Journal*, 19 October; *Times*, 22 October 1830.

to commit him to trial, however none of the farmers recognised him. Despite this lack of evidence Blakey was also committed as a rogue and a vagabond.¹⁷

Chief Constable Hall was then sent to Lewes to assist in Day's enquiries, but again to no avail. Peel's suggestion that Day should involve the Kent and Surrey magistrates in his enquiries was also acted upon but by 25 October the co-operation had turned to competition, despite a last minute meeting called by Camden, the Lord Lieutenant of Kent, in attempt to resolve their differences. The repeated, often contradictory, questioning by the different magistrates had led to an irresolvable impasse. Camden's post-mortem made unwelcome reading for the increasingly harassed Peel: 'rows' had occurred between the Sussex and Surrey authorities. 'The Magistracy must be alert and not suffer any political feelings, or fanciful conceits to prevent them acting with vigor', was Camden's stark conclusion. Magistrate Day however had a different opinion, instead putting the blame squarely on the Government for their lack of cooperation.¹⁸

III: *The Canterbury Trial*

The first documented involvement of the forces of law and order was on 30 August when Upper Hardres farmer William Dodd laid an information before Richard Halford and General Mulcaster, two East Kent magistrates. Dodd stated that a 'riotous and tumultuous assembly' of 100 people had already destroyed four threshing machines and that he hoped the justices would take such steps as necessary to protect his property. Acting on this information, Halford and Mulcaster, accompanied by several specially sworn special constables, proceeded to the Dodd's farm, and, after waiting for several uneventful hours, returned home. Dodd, alarmed that an attack was still likely, called for military assistance, however the 30 7th Dragoons procured also saw no action.¹⁹

From the correspondence of Reverend Price and Quarter Sessions depositions it is apparent that George Leadbitter, a member of the Bow Street Police, was sent to Elham to investigate, though there is no record of Knatchbull calling for such assistance, a document that would be filed in either the 'Domestic Correspondence' or the 'County Correspondence'

¹⁷ Peel to Lord Camden, 22 October, CKS U840 C250 10/3; *Times*, 22 October 1830.

¹⁸ *Ibid*; Camden, The Wilderness, nr. Sevenoaks to Peel, 24 and 25 October, and William Day, Maresfield to Phillips, 7 November 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.19-20, 231-2 and 220-3.

¹⁹ CKS Q/Sbe 120/1, information of William Dodd, yeoman, Upper Hardres, 30 August; *Kentish Gazette*, 3 September; *Kent Herald*, 3 September 1830.

files of the Home Office. One anonymous informer from Paddlesworth claimed that the area was in anarchy as the small farmers were active in the machine breaking gangs, and that, as the local magistrates were ineffectual, Peel should send down a London police officer to reassert order. However, there is no record in either the Home Office files or the personal correspondence of Peel of any formal request. More surprisingly there is no record of Leadbitter being in the employ of the Bow Street office until the following year.²⁰ Knatchbull was a tireless magistrate and an old fashion Tory opposed to police reform. It is quite unlikely that he would have instigated the call for outside assistance within his jurisdiction as magistrate, although in the immediate post-trial intensification Knatchbull suggested to Peel, with criticism of his sentencing in mind, that it was 'extremely probable that intelligent officers station'd as required, may render much service to the Magistrates', although from his tone he clearly believed he required no such assistance.²¹

As Leadbitter was in Elham before the Canterbury trial we cannot ascribe his role as a response by Peel to Knatchbull's 'unparalleled lenity', rather Leadbitter's function was as a general go-between. He assisted Rev. Price in taking the charged to Canterbury gaol – presumably under the belief that the parish constable alone would be too inefficient and somewhat susceptible to pressure from the comrades of those charged to carry out this duty – and to offer advice to the magistrates, something Price was only too happy to call upon after his fire, although Price had 'not the slightest clue to the proceedings'.²²

It was Reverend Bramall, the Elham vicar, though, whose detective work made the decisive breakthrough in apprehending the machine breakers. Bramall took it upon himself in his pastoral role to attempt to convince the men to surrender voluntarily; indeed, he had not inconsiderable success with 50 men coming forward, many of whom had been press-ganged into taking part in the machine breaking episodes. Some had been bribed beyond resistance with beer, whilst others had been genuinely under the impression that it was not illegal to break threshing machines. When told by Bramall that it was an offence punishable by law, they were persuaded that it would lessen their chances of conviction if they confessed.²³

²⁰ see H[ome] O[ffice] 60/1 and 2, 62/6. Leadbitter first referred to on 5 April 1831, HO 60/2 p.541.

²¹ D. Phillips and R. Storch, *Policing Provincial England, 1829 – 1856* (London, 1999), pp.183-7. Knatchbull, Mersham, to Peel, 27 October 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.382-3.

²² T.P. Junior, Denton, to Knatchbull, 26 September, and Rev. Price, Lyminge, to Knatchbull, 6 October 1830, CKS U951 C177/17 and 25.

²³ Rev. Bramall, Elham, to Rev. Price, 6 October, and Rev. Price to Knatchbull, no date (probably 7 October) and, List of 37 persons involved in machine breaking between 25 August and 22 September who voluntarily surrendered and were bound by recognizances to appear at the next Assizes, no date

At a meeting of East Kent magistrates, called to discuss the actions that should be taken to bring the machine breakers to trial (held in Canterbury on the 25 September), the assembled justices decided to raise a subscription to offer a reward of £500 for sufficient evidence to convict the ringleaders in court. Knatchbull believed that this approach was vital as 'in cases like the present people were afraid to say what they know, and this money would be used to induce them to give the necessary information'. Also on the same day the 'Farmers of East Kent' met at the Rose Inn, Canterbury, where Knatchbull, with an ironic foresight, stated his belief that 'the laws of our country ought not to be violated in this disgraceful manner...an end should be brought to these unlawful proceedings, or they might lead to more serious results'. The chairman was Edward Hughes of Smeeth who had already lost his threshing machine in a nightly raid by the Elham Gang. Hughes, still smarting from the attack, proffered his opinion that 'the Magistrates, if they had not taken those early steps which they might have done, they had certainly now come forward with great energy'. Hughes also claimed the gang were planning to attack the clergy.²⁴

In the last week of September several men who had been on machine breaking episodes,²⁵ gave statements, despite a pact the men had made 'that if any constable came to take any of them the others were to rescue them' and that if any of them gave evidence against them 'the others would kill them'.²⁶ Rev. Price, spurred on by the comment from the farmers that he did not view the events with the same horror, attended a second meeting of the farmers to show he too would not tolerate such actions, and with several depositions taken, started proceedings against the supposed ringleaders. On the morning of the 27 September, over a month after the first machine was destroyed, the Constables, presumably including Leadbitter, caught Edward Read, one of the 'Head Men'. Later that evening Price also arrested Ingram Swaine, the supposed lead figure, but didn't manage to capture Swaine's co-resident William Spicer who fled the house. Over the next few days other 'ringleaders' were also captured and the recognizances of 37 men were taken to appear, if called, at the next Assizes.²⁷ Phillips, writing on behalf of Peel to Knatchbull, approved of the actions of the magistrates, but

(however after 22 September), CKS U951 C177/26, 27, and 13; Knatchbull, Mersham, to Peel, 6 October 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.276-7.

²⁴ Notes of Justices meeting at Canterbury, 25 September, CKS U951 C177/15; *Kent Herald*, 30 September 1830.

²⁵ Confession of Jack Spicer, labourer, n.d. (but September or October 1830), CKS U951 C177/12.

²⁶ Various unsigned depositions taken by Knatchbull, n.d. (but September or October 1830), CKS U951 C177/22.

²⁷ *Kent Herald*, 7 October; *Kentish Gazette*, 8 October; Rev Price to Knatchbull, 27 September 1830 and List of persons involved sworn on recognizances, CKS U951 C177/18 and 13.

tempered Bramall's Christian actions with clear formal legal advice: 'He [Peel] feels confident that the Magistracy will take as much care as possible in discharging persons, who may voluntarily surrender, on their own Recognizances' and that these recognizances would probably be forfeited though the ringleaders had to be made an example.²⁸

Hughes' prediction turned out to be correct: the men, it appears, were outraged at Price's zealous actions, not least as they were partly inspired to break the machines after his earlier negative comments and his support of their cause in the gleaning dispute. Price had received intelligence in the afternoon of Monday 4 October that he may expect 'a Body of the rioters to wait on me (and to come and buy Sherry!) to ascertain whether the machines shall be put down, if they will surrender themselves, and return, like Good Boys to their Duty'. Price contacted Knatchbull that evening as he was unsure what to do, although he believed that he should make 'no concession – no compromise of course', but could not see what option he had but to give the labourers an affirmative answer. In the event Knatchbull did not have enough time to respond, for on the following day Price's farmyard was reduced to ashes.²⁹

The alarm had been given at about 10pm, but the fire had already been blazing for some time. James Fowley, who had been digging potatoes in a field in view of Price's farm, saw, at 6:10pm, first a woman with a child on a donkey cart, followed a few moments later by a couple with two children. Just before half past six he left the field. At 6:45pm when he passed there was nothing untoward. Edward Gower, also in the employ of Price and the veteran of at least one machine breaking episode, had left the barn at 6pm, and passed it again at 6.30pm when he saw Fowley at work in the field. When he arrived at the barn he met a dishevelled John Carvill who told him that he had run out of the fire with his clothes off. Gower later convinced himself that it was Carvill who had set fire to Price's barn³⁰. The next day Carvill refused to swear on oath, claiming his word was as good as his oath, which as he had already sworn once he would never swear again. He claimed that he left the Poor House in Lyminge just after the clock struck seven and went directly to Price's barn and stack-yard, upon which he crept into one of the lodges in the yard and fell asleep at about 7.15pm, at which time there was no fire. After a 'while' he was woken suddenly by a 'roaring' noise,

²⁸ Phillips, Whitehall, to Knatchbull, 30 September and 2 October, CKS U951 C11/21 and 23. Peel however also stated his belief that rewards encouraged agent provocateurs to stir up trouble in attempt to claim the reward: Peel, to Camden, 18 October 1830, CKS U840 C250 10/2.

²⁹ Rev. Price, Lyminge, to Knatchbull, 4 and 6 October 1830, CKS U951 C177/ 24 and 25.

³⁰ Depositions of John Wakefield, bailiff, James Fowley, labourer, Edward Gower, labourer, all n.d. (but 6 October 1830), CKS U951 C177/31.

which he ascertained was from a fire, and so alarmed, Carvill grabbed his clothes and ran out of the yard, dressing himself as he left, meeting Gower and 'many others' close behind him³¹.

Price had paid the price for his inconsistency and had forced Knatchbull's hand into contacting Peel to explain the cause of events. Knatchbull's letter gives us the clearest statement of his policy in dealing with the machine breakers. He, and Price, had been 'adopting and enforcing such measures as he considered most likely to restore the Peace' and the fire was the direct result of his role in apprehending the machine breakers. However, he also claimed that the root of the problem was the fact the farmers were very short of money and consequently couldn't employ enough labourers and pay those they did employ properly: 'they would rather do anything than encounter such a winter as the last'.³² Peel responded with an offer of a reward of £100 to capture the incendiary, a sum of money, he made sure to mention, he could only offer as the afflicted party was a county magistrate.³³

The events at Price's farm sent his Elham counterpart, Rev. Bramall, into a panic. Bramall wrote to Price on the 6 October fearing a similar reprisal:

From what Mr. Pitlock informs me, I apprehend very effectual means are about being adopted against some of my parishioners who thro' my exertions have surrendered themselves to your men as persons concerned in breaking the threshing machines – should such be the resolution of the Gentlemen met at your house, I beg to suggest to their consideration, whether I ought not at the same time to be arrested (or at least allowed to remove out of the neighbourhood for a season) [this crossed out] I need not explain my motive for offering this advice I am a husband, the father of a large family with the children of others under my roof. I may have acted indiscreetly in what I have done but I took no step without seeking that aid which a Christian ministry is bound to ask for in the hour of peril and difficulty.

P.S. I have shown the foregoing to Mrs. Brammall who advises me to explain more fully my motive for writing to you – It is then no other than a persuasion that my life is in jeopardy if the parties alluded to should be arrested³⁴

C.H. Hallett also wrote to Knatchbull with a concern for Bramall's well being. The Elham vicar had confided in Hallett that he thought the men who had volunteered themselves to him

³¹ Deposition of John Carvill, labourer, 6 October 1830, CKS U951 C177/32.

³² Knatchbull, Mersham, to Peel, 6 October 1830 (draft), CKS U951 C177/28.

³³ Phillips, to Knatchbull, 9 October 1830, CKS U951 C177/34.

³⁴ Rev. Bramall, Elham, to Price, 6 October 1830 (forwarded to Knatchbull), CKS U951 C177/26.

would think that he had entrapped them, though he was convinced in light of recent conduct they would be more likely to help discover incendiaryists than instigate it.³⁵

By the time of the first trial Knatchbull's hands were effectively tied. One fellow magistrate had become a victim of his own inconsistencies and the man chiefly responsible for the surrender of the machine breakers had put his own Christian faith before the law, and in so doing had exposed himself to the vagaries of the law, rendering him unable to perform his pastoral duties through fear of reprisals. Undoubtedly Knatchbull too was living in fear of a covert attack for his part in the proceedings, especially considering machines had been broken in parishes bordering his village of Mersham.

The seven men from Elham and Lyminge taken into detention by Price, with help from Bramall and Leadbitter, had already spent over three weeks in the Canterbury gaol before their trial. In Elham the families of Henry and Edward Read, as well as Ingram Swaine, were consequently receiving relief from the parish.³⁶ Bramall in his position as a member of the Elham vestry took the opportunity of a scheduled vestry *meeting to increase his credentials* with his flock, and thereby his safety, by inviting either Price or another member of the Lyminge vestry to discuss the 'poor men currently in Canterbury gaol'. Symbolically this appeal was made on the day before the trial. No response was received but presumably Reverend Bramall had improved the chances of not being the next victim of a vengeful incendiaryist.³⁷

At the Quarter Sessions both Price and Lord Camden attended along with at least 22 other East Kent magistrates. Knatchbull, in the customary preamble to the Grand Jury, made the astonishing confession that he did not understand the nature of the evidence in support of the charges, for he had not had enough time to read the lengthy depositions, *although he stated* that, by way of a deterrent, anyone who was with machine breakers at the time, even if they were not one of the actual destroyers, were guilty of aiding and abetting. If the evidence was satisfactory, Knatchbull reminded the Grand Jury they must find the accused guilty, although unusually none of the evidence had come from the victims of the 'crimes'. Much relied on the admissibility of two accomplices who had turned King's evidence against their fellow accused. Mr. Pollock, the counsel for the prosecution, called up the two 'approvers' before the Grand Jury on the bills brought before them. The Jury found the bills true, thus accepting their

³⁵ C.H. Hallett, to Knatchbull, n.d. (but 6 October 1830), CKS U951 C177/29. Hallett also sent an express to Leadbitter, then in Canterbury, presumably detailing Bramall's distress.

³⁶ Elham Vestry Minutes, 4 and 18 October, and 1 November 1830, CAN U3/121/8/2.

³⁷ Elham Vestry Minute, 21 October 1830, CAN U3/121/8/2.

evidence as admissible for the charges brought, and so returned to the courtroom. William Spicer was the first of the men before the court. He pleaded guilty to being present, though not to breaking the machine. Knatchbull approved of the plea and advised Spicer not to retract it. All the other men followed Spicer, with the exception of David Arnold who pleaded not guilty to both charges, but admitted his guilt to a similar offence. As all the men, bar Arnold, had admitted their guilt in being present, Pollock decided he would not trouble the court with the evidence, thus bizarrely acquitting Arnold despite his having admitted his guilt to a non-indicted offence. The magistrates then retired for a short time before the 'prisoners' were brought to the bar to hear their sentences. Knatchbull in passing sentence thought that the fact the men had acted 'under ill and dangerous advice, and upon mistaken notions of your interest and welfare' was not mitigating circumstances, but, considering that so many of their fellow villagers had also come forward to admit their presence, he could not convict them for seven years transportation. He would, however, give that verdict to any future machine breakers found guilty before the court. Instead they were sentenced to four days each in prison without hard labour.³⁸

IV: The Response of Peel

Despite the fact that each Quarter Sessions and every Assize was left to its own judgement in interpreting Acts of Parliament and 'turning general principles into practical day to day policies', there has been too much emphasis on the 'hands off' role of the Tory government.³⁹ Peel, either directly or through Under-Secretary Phillips, kept a constant train of correspondence with local magistrates, a ministerial tool used to manipulate the application of the law. But Peel well knew the importance of following protocol in such matters, his network of county and city magistrates were in most cases the only sources of information he had about events in the provinces. He, like Melbourne, was reluctant to use spies, and was sensitive to the sensibilities and vanities of magistrates:

If I originated utterance with the ordinary executions of the local magistrates or did anything – but profess a readiness to attend to any suggestion that they

³⁸ *Kent Herald*, 28 October; Gaol Calendar, East Kent Michaelmas Quarter Sessions 1830, CKS Q/SBe 120/36.

³⁹ Keith-Lucas, B. *The Unreformed Local Government System* (London, 1980), p.64.

offered me – I might be counteracting them undesignedly – and certainly think I should incur the Risk of offending some.⁴⁰

However, Peel knew that others would take less offence, and even before the trial he readily intervened. He kept a regular train of correspondence with Knatchbull and Lord Camden until the Tory government was replaced in the day-to-day running of government departments by the new Whig administration.⁴¹ This correspondence, though, was not entered in the official Home Office Disturbances Entry Book until 26 October, i.e. after the trial. Quite why Peel thought it wise not record the initial Swing activities in the official records is not clear. Perhaps he believed that the first events in East Kent did not warrant the label of ‘disturbance’, for throughout the 1820’s the entry book was used only to record cases of seditious activity, attacks on local officials or riot.⁴²

Peel’s correspondence with Lord Camden in the few days before the trial shows his deft touch. On 16 October Peel responded to Camden’s report of the West Kent incendiary fires by consoling him with the empathetic lament that he well knew ‘the difficulty of taking effectual Precaution against the malignant designs of the incendiary’ and that in his experience ‘Local vigilance is the best Remedy’ but ‘yet even that may be defeated’. However, this did not stop Peel actually soliciting from Camden a response as to what he actually wanted the Government to do: ‘if they [the local magistrates] can point out...any mode in which the assistance of the Government can be useful – I shall have every duty to attend to these suggestions’. Until that moment Peel’s hands were effectively tied, something he exasperatedly set out in his subsequent letter to Camden, ‘How can I *commence “a system of cooperation”* with the local authorities – they who have local knowledge – local experience [to] point out to me what way I can assist them? This is the uniform course in other Counties’. Camden’s initial response was to ask for a reward to help in the capture of the incendiaries, as had been offered previously in the case of Rev. Price’s fire. Peel, however, followed what he saw as ‘the *invariable* practice of the Home Department even in the worst of times’ by declining a reward, stating that ‘the Principle is of more importance’. Peel even went as far as to state that he believed large rewards spurred the devious on to raise fires so they could claim the reward. He would, however, offer a pardon to any accomplice offering enough evidence to convict the culprit and would send extra troops in addition to the police officers already sent to ‘assist the

⁴⁰ Peel, to Camden, 18 October 1830, CKS U840 C250 10/2.

⁴¹ See the series: CKS U951 C177 and C14; CKS U840 C250.

magistracy'.⁴³ Peel did, however, sanction the offer of a £100 reward and a pardon from the Government to help in the investigation of the fire on Mr. Knight's Borden farm on 22 October – the night of the trial; but this was the last such case until Melbourne's proclamation on 23 November offering a £500 reward in all cases of incendiarism.⁴⁴ It was the offer of additional troops that suggests Peel really thought that the local magistrates had started to lose control. As early as the end of September, Charles Sandys, clerk to the Canterbury bench of magistrates, wrote to Peel claiming that the Magistrates were finding it very hard to procure any evidence against the machine breakers and would therefore 'be happy to receive any communication or advice which you may think proper to offer them'.⁴⁵

Peel had already been warned about the actions of the justices in East Kent. A 'Kentish farmer' from Swingfield Minnis had written to Peel on 13 September despairing that, considering the men had been 'going more than a month', he was 'greatly surprised our County Justices... do not put a stop to it', especially as, he claimed, it was common knowledge in the area that 'they mean to pull down soon the Union Workhouse at Elham'. What had been, on the surface at least, a form of rural Luddism, was germinating into a politicised rural insurrection. Presumably with Price's previously reported interventions in mind, the farmer put forward the conspiracy theory that the neglect of the justices was 'Designedly done', with Rev. Price and Mr. Honynwood, the late County MP, resident at nearby Elmstead, encouraging them on.⁴⁶ Edward Hughes, one of the largest and most influential farmers in East Kent, two days before he shared the platform with Knatchbull in Canterbury, offered his opinion to the Home Office that 'no less than 20 persons have suffered' at the hands of the machine breakers due to the 'inefficiency of the local authorities to keep order and Property inviolate'.⁴⁷

Peel well knew that the trial of the Elham men was scheduled. He had been informed that the recognizances of 37 men had been taken and that eight Elham men had been apprehended. Peel had also written to Camden on 16 October thanking him for his 'impending

⁴² Phillips to Rev. Dr. Poore, Murston, Kent, 26 October 1830, PRO HO 41/8, p.12. From 1820 'disturbance' in-letters were classified as HO 40, out-letters were similarly classified as HO 41.

⁴³ Peel to Camden, 18 and 16 October, CKS U840 C250/10/2 and 1; Camden, Bagham Abbey, to Peel, 17 October 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.243-4.

⁴⁴ *London Gazette*, 26 October and 23 November 1830 (nos. 18738, p.2236 and 18749, p.2473).

⁴⁵ Charles Sandys, clerk to Canterbury bench of magistrates, to Peel, 22 September 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.271-2.

⁴⁶ 'A Kentish Farmer', South Kent, to Home Office, 13 September 1830, PRO HO 44/21, ff.241-2. No record exists of Deedes helping in the investigation, despite his status as one of the local magistrates. Again, nothing is known about Honynwood's involvement.

⁴⁷ Edward Hughes, Smeeth Hill House, to Home Office, 23 September 1830, PRO HO 44/22, ff. 263-6.

visit to the sessions'.⁴⁸ Presumably believing that the trial would put a stop to the machine breaking, Peel's letter to Camden on the 22 October made no mention of the Canterbury trial, instead his thoughts had shifted to what he saw as the 'mystery of the fires'. Peel believed that in order to unravel the 'mystery' there should be 'a concert and unity of action', to which end he sent down a London police officer to assist the local judiciary. Camden in fact had appealed for the assistance of an officer in Sevenoaks three days earlier.⁴⁹ After the trial had ended (22 October) Camden wrote from Canterbury to inform Peel that not only had three fires occurred in Kent on the previous night but also, rather disparagingly, that: 'They [the Elham machine breakers] were sentenced to a confinement in the Gaol for 3 Days!'.⁵⁰

V: After the Trial

The day after the trial three machines were destroyed in the Bekesbourne area; a machine at Sandwich became the first to be broken in broad daylight; and the first case of machine breaking occurred outside of East Kent, at Hartlip.⁵¹ Everyone, it seemed, was ready to level the blame for this post-trial intensification on Knatchbull. George Gipps, a large farmer at Bekesbourne, related the apparently widespread dissatisfaction of local farmers with the sentences, claiming that it had led to 'nightly alarm and destruction of property'. Sir Henry Montresor, who had already lost a threshing machine to the exertions of the Elham gang, philosophised that: 'the subsequent outrages bear out... [my] arguments ... [that] temporising with anarchists seldom succeeds; as a seditious and revolutionary spirit pervades the country nothing less than the extreme rigors of the law, will preserve social order'. But it must have been the comments of Mary Tylden, informing Knatchbull of the disturbances at Frinsted (beginning on 25 October), which hit hardest: 'Why is Justice asleep and afraid to show itself?'⁵² The correspondent to the Poor Law Enquiry in 1832 from Blechingley, Surrey, believed that the later spread of Swing beyond Kent was the direct result of the actions of 'the magistracy in the Districts where they commenced' who had 'much to answer for'. The

⁴⁸ Knatchbull, Mersham, to Peel, 6 October 1830 (draft), CKS U951 C177/28; Peel to Camden, 16 October 1830, CKS U840 C250/10/1.

⁴⁹ Peel to Camden, 22 October 1830, CKS U840 C250/10/3; Camden, Wilderness, to Peel, 19 October 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.214-5.

⁵⁰ Camden, Canterbury, to Peel, 22 October 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.216-8.

⁵¹ For the details of individual incident see chapter 3 and appendix 1.2

⁵² George Gipps, Howletts, 24 October, Sir Henry Montresor, Barham, 27 October, Mary Tylden to Knatchbull, 1 November 1830, CKS, U951 C177/36, C14/4 and 9.

Rodmersham (West Kent) correspondent went further: they ‘were encouraged by the leniency (I had almost said the pusillanimity) with which the Rioters were treated by the Bench of East Kent Magistrates after they were legally convicted of the offence’. Even Camden expressed his dismay at the effect of the sentences: ‘The County wants something to show that the authorities have not been asleep’.⁵³ Three days after the trial Peel responded, his tone in total contrast to the earlier correspondence:

I should have thought a severe example in the case of Destruction of farming property would have had a much greater effect – than the unparalleled lenity shown to the Destroyers of Thrashing Machines.

If Peel’s resolve had been stiffened by the events immediately after the trial, the mass outbreak of machine breaking in the Ash area on 25 October was decisive in his decision to again concentrate his thoughts on machine breaking. His direct responses were twofold. First his anger was translated into action, informing Camden as early as the 26 October that George Maule, no less than the Treasury Solicitor, was to be sent to Maidstone to assist in the general communication with ‘the most active magistrates in the County’.⁵⁴ Phillips, issuing Maule his charge, rather tellingly commented that ‘there has been a good deal of inactivity or want of concert among the Magistracy in general’ and in consequence Peel ‘attaches the greatest importance to your mission’.⁵⁵ Maule’s mission was later extended into Sussex and, four days before Peel was replaced, to act as the prosecutor of the machine breakers at the Maidstone Winter Assizes.⁵⁶ Another direct response was Peel’s decision to summon to Whitehall two Wingham magistrates (an unprecedented move) who had written to request the dispatch of Police Officers to help apprehend the machine breakers active in the area between Wingham and Sandwich. Sir Robert wished to impress on these justices the need not to relax, in total contrast to his earlier statement: ‘How can I *commence “a system of cooperation”* with the local authorities – they who have local knowledge – local experience [to] point out to me what way I can assist them?’ Whilst this *was* a direct government intervention, it had to look like the

⁵³ PRO P[arliamentary] P[apers], *Reports of the Commissioners of Poor Laws*, vol. Xxxiv. P.475(e) and vol. Xxxiv, p. 260(e). Camden to Peel, 27 October 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.241-2.

⁵⁴ Peel to Camden, 25 and 26 October 1830, CKS U840 C250/10/6 and 7.

⁵⁵ Phillips, Whitehall, to Maule, Treasury Solicitor, Maidstone, 31 October 1830, PRO HO 41/8 pp.24-25.

⁵⁶ Phillips to Maule, Maidstone, 11 and 19 November 1830, PRO HO 41/8, pp. 32 and 72-3.

government was only assisting the local forces so as not to break the Home Secretaries' constitutional code.⁵⁷

Whilst Central Government influenced medium term strategy, it had no practical power to intervene in the *actual event*: as such event 'management' was left entirely to the local authorities. A long established practice used to counter all forms of illegal groupings was the mass swearing in of special constables, effectively creating a local civilian army ready to mobilise at little notice to counter localised attacks. Specials had already been deployed at Upper Hardres in the vain attempt to protect Dodd's threshing machines, and had been sworn in for the 'effected area' covered by the Elham gang, this being the main resolution at a meeting of the Magistrates called to decide 'what measures to take'.⁵⁸ The riot at Queenborough on 25 October prompted the Mayor to swear in 22 specials. They successfully managed to disarm the crowd of staves but were powerless to stop the crowd from locking the Mayor into the Town Hall.⁵⁹ The recruitment of Specials after the trial would, however, prove more problematic. Attempts to swear in specials to counter the assemblages in the vicinity of Hollingbourne which began on 25 October were frustrated by an almost blanket refusal to take the oath. At Faversham this refusal was attributed to 'fear...attended with political prejudices' made worse by the fire at nearby Selling Court that generated 'so great [a]...panic that it appeared to me as if all men paralysed'.⁶⁰ The threat of a mass general meeting on Penenden Heath convinced the Maidstone Bench of the need to raise a large civil force to keep order, but realised the almost impossibility of the task as 'most [specials] have refused to be sworn'. Another attempt to swear in specials at Maidstone on 30 October proved an unmitigated disaster, the blanket refusal forcing the authorities to rely on the support of the military in suppressing the encroaching crowds.⁶¹ The extremely agitated state of Charing and Lenham prompted the Ashford Bench to call a general meeting of the owners and occupiers of land to avert the rest of the district falling into anarchy. Agricultural labourers were set at 'proper wages' and a scheme was established to swear in '8 or 10 respectable persons per parish' as

⁵⁷ John Plumptree and Mr. Hammond, St Albans Court, Fredville, Wingham to Peel, 25 October, PRO HO 52/8, ff.363-4; Peel to Camden, 18 and 26 October 1830, CKS U840 C250/10/2 and 7.

⁵⁸ Edward Rice, High Sheriff of Kent, Dane Court, n.r. Wingham, to Peel, 25 September, PRO HO 52/8, ff.273-4; *Times*, 27 September 1830.

⁵⁹ Rev. Poore, Murston to Peel, 25 October, PRO HO 52/8, ff.365-6; Rev. Poore to Knatchbull, 26 October 1830, CKS U951 C14/7.

⁶⁰ Camden, 26 October, enclosing Mr. Scudamore, Wrotham Heath to Camden, 26 October (4pm), Rev. Poore, Murston, 29 October, to Peel, PRO HO 52/8, ff.228-230 and 367-8; Rev. Poore to Knatchbull, n.d.(but 28 October), CKS U951 C14/8; *Kent Herald*, 4 November 1830.

specials, but most of those called refused to be sworn. A heady mix of anti-Government feeling, fear of reprisals, and solidarity with the labourers' cause had left Kentish magistrates no option but to rely on military force against the maelstrom in the countryside.⁶² Peel's response was to authorise, on 26 October, the dispatch of a Cavalry force to Sittingbourne, with a further Cavalry force to arrive at Maidstone on 31 October assisted by two artillery pieces. Colonel Middleton was warned, though, that the authorities should 'always avoid' using military force.⁶³

The spread of overt activity into the Sussex Weald presented exactly the same problems, indeed the manipulative actions of many farmers in harnessing Swing's power to force tithe and rent reductions necessarily required a total refusal to act in any repressive capacity. Such was the case at Robertsbridge, where the farmers for the first time were *seen* to actively support the actions of the crowd in overt opposition to the magistrates.⁶⁴ The experience at Tunbridge Wells was similar. A 'special meeting' on 12 November swore in 'about 120 special constables'. It later transpired these were 'all respectable Gentlemen' who had 'come forward'. Three days later, of the 322 people summoned to be sworn, 273 either defaulted or refused to take the oath, the general reason, other than a dislike to being called from home 'to a distant part of the division', was 'the conduct of the Government and those in power shewing inattention to the petitions for relief and otherwise addressed to the legislature'. Others, reported the *Maidstone Journal*, believed there was no point in being sworn as the labourers of the parish had no disposition to riot, although according to Major General Lord Fitzroy-Somerset those who refused were 'almost all farmers'.⁶⁵ At Cranbrook on 16 November, after a week of 'mobbing' in the vicinity, several hundred people were summoned from the neighbouring parishes to be sworn. All of those from Staplehurst and Marden refused, and only two of the Cranbrook people took the oath; the result was a

⁶¹ Maidstone Magistrates to Peel, 30 October, PRO HO 52/8, ff.28-9; *Maidstone Journal*, 2 November; *Hastings and Cinque Ports Iris*, 6 November 1830.

⁶² Knatchbull to Camden, 29 October, CKS U951 C14/2; *Kent Herald*, 4 November; *Kentish Gazette*, 5 November 1830.

⁶³ Phillips, Home Office, to Rev. Poore, Murston; Peel to Maidstone Magistrates; and, Peel to Colonel Middleton, Cavalry Depot, Maidstone, 26 and 31 October and 1 November, PRO HO 41/8, pp. 12, 22 and 23. The detachment of troops to Sittingbourne was a direct result of an appeal by the respected Rev. Poore: see Rev. Poore, Murston to Peel, 25 October 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.365-6.

⁶⁴ Messrs. Collingwood and Young, Hawkhurst, to Peel, 11 November 1830, PRO HO 52/10, ff.166-170.

⁶⁵ Phillip Bremmidge, Tunbridge Wells (twice), Clerks to Tunbridge Wells Magistrates, and Major General Lord Fitzroy-Somerset, Tunbridge Wells, to Peel, 12, 15, 15 and 16 November, PRO HO 52/8, ff.283-4, 294-6, 314-5 and 16; *Maidstone Journal*, 23 November 1830.

considerable fracas necessitating the military assistance.⁶⁶ Evidence from the provincial press suggested that a degree of pressure was being used in forcing the employees of local grandees; indeed all those employed at the Castle in Mayfield were sworn under compulsion.⁶⁷

Even where specials were sworn in the Weald they proved controversial. The workhouse affrays at Ninfield and Westham were only suppressed by the activities of a meagre 25-30 specials assisted by 'some active persons', a shadowy and dubious force.⁶⁸ On 17 November a body of specials assisted Sir Godfrey Webster and Frederick North in the arrest of the Brede ringleaders, something fellow Magistrate Courthope believed was only possible because the Brede populace had been warned that 'troops were at hand'.⁶⁹ As Swing moved eastwards into the fringes of Romney Marsh and westward beyond the Weald less resistance was made by those summoned to be sworn, essentially because of the lower numbers of the economically marginal small farmers so predominant in the Weald and in the Kentish downland.⁷⁰ At Eastbourne specials were successfully sworn in to act as nightly watches, and at Lewes a constabulary force of specials was organised to patrol the surrounding countryside, with recalcitrant householders who refused to take the oath threatened with indictment at the Sessions. Importantly both schemes were in response to threat of incendiarism rather than assemblages.⁷¹ During the affray at Ruckinge on 16 November it was the actions of the specials (mainly farmers) rather than the detachment of Staff Corps that merited particular praise from the acting magistrate.⁷² The citizens of several West Sussex towns, however, proved to be less conducive. At Arundel such problems lead to a plea from Peel, ever in heed to procedure, to the Mayor that the magistrates should instead apply for a military force. In the aftermath of the siege at Horsham Church only four of the 63 people summoned took the oath;

⁶⁶ *Kent Herald*, 18 November 1830.

⁶⁷ *Brighton Gazette*, 18 November 1830.

⁶⁸ Sir Godfrey Webster, Battle Abbey, to Peel, 9 November 1830, PRO HO 52/10, ff.388-9.

⁶⁹ Courthope, Battle to Peel, 17 November 1830, PRO HO 52/10, ff.413-4.

⁷⁰ For examples of the effective use of specials in West Sussex see: *Hastings and Cinque Ports Iris*, 20 November (at Pagham); *Hampshire Telegraph*, 22 November (at Eartham); *Sussex Advertiser*, 22 November (around Arundel); *Times*, 23 November (at Nutbourne); *Sussex Advertiser*, 6 December 1830 (Chichester area).

⁷¹ *Sussex Advertiser*, 29 November and 6 December. A fire on the Southover (parish of St. John the Baptist, Lewes) farm of Mr. Durrant on the night of 18 November prompted the Lewes Town Council to hold a meeting to swear in special constables. The scheme decided upon was the most systematic yet adopted; whereby specials, to be paid by a new fund, would assist the town constables and Headboroughs in watching and patrolling various divisions including the surrounding rural parishes: Sussex Record Society (eds.), *Lewes Town Book, 1702-1837*, Vol. 69; Brighton and nearby Portslade also swore in substantial civil forces, even though they doubted they would be needed: *Sussex Advertiser*, 29 November 1830.

⁷² WR Cosway, Sandgate, to Peel, 17 November 1830, PRO HO 52/8, 2-7.

instead a military force was stationed at Horsham to prevent further outrages and calls were made for the assistance of some London police officers, whose professional and geographical detachment was necessary due to the complicity of many of the 'wealthy inhabitants' in the late affray.⁷³ Police Officer Johns was sent from London to act as an undercover agent infiltrating the complex and highly charged Horsham Radical Party. However, after the arrest of three men in connection with the affray at the Church, Johns feared for his safety and made a speedy retreat to London.⁷⁴

The belief of the Horsham authorities in the ineffectiveness of local constables in the face of complex and entrenched local support for Swing activists was echoed elsewhere. Rev. Jones at Brasted (near Sevenoaks) believed that, against the intimidation of the incendiary, 'it is doubtful by whom they [constables] can be directed and compelled to fulfil [their]...duty when necessary': regulations were needed to force local constables to 'act'.⁷⁵ Even special constables – who had just taken the oath – were prone to be unreliable; one of the men arrested in connection with machine breaking on the Isle of Thanet had only days before taken the oath. Even the revered London police officers were of little use against a mob determined to destroy threshing machines, as Leadbitter found to his cost when he was assaulted on the Thanet farm of George Hannam.⁷⁶

VI

By 2 November it appeared that the local authorities were in paralysis. Whilst the populace of West Kent and the Weald had doggedly refused to assist in Swing's suppression, evidence abounded that even military forces were often ineffective against mobile crowds. The 'popular' meeting on Penenden Heath, Maidstone, called for 'Reform in the Commons House of Parl. Vote by ballot or 2 years or nothing' but more ominously also proclaimed 'respect the soldiers as they are friends'. At Smithfield in London, so Maule had been informed, a penny subscription had been supposedly set up to purchase arms for the Kentish protestors: an

⁷³ Phillips, Home Office to Mayor of Arundel, 20 November, PRO HO 41/8, p.87. Walter Burrell, West Grinstead Park to Peel, 21 November, and Burrell to Melbourne, 28 November 1830, PRO HO 52/10, ff.555-6 and 557-8.

⁷⁴ Walter Burrell, West Grinstead Park, to Melbourne, 9 and 12 December 1830, PRO HO 52/10, ff.569-70 and 573-5.

⁷⁵ Rev. Jones, Brasted, to Peel, 6 November 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.310-1.

⁷⁶ John Boys, Clerk to the Margate Bench, to Maule, 23 November 1830 (forwarded to the Home Office), Sir J. Grey, Ramsgate, to Melbourne, 17 November 1831, PRO HO 52/8, ff.33-4 and 52/13, ff.32-5.

aggressive military suppression would be bitterly resisted. Troops drafted into Maidstone from Chatham, Woolwich and Epsom were said to be fatigued; that many of the soldiers had to be billeted due to lack of Barrack accommodation hardly improved morale. By 1 November Maidstone boasted a substantial military force but even this proved ineffective in *preventing* parochial risings. Moreover, even when news reached Maidstone of a disturbance, troops could not be dispatched until they had been applied for by a magistrate, even then the military was still insufficient in numbers to adequately cover all areas where mass risings were now occurring on a daily basis. Instead troops were being forced to shuffle from place to place in *response* to events rather than as a pro-active deterrent, leading to increasing fatigue in their ranks.⁷⁷ This fatigue was even manifest in the magistrates.⁷⁸ Increasingly irritated with this inability to curb the activities of wandering gangs in West Kent and the Weald, Peel wrote to Camden as early as 2 November to advise that the Kent Corps of Yeoman Cavalry should be re-established:

I cannot but think the re-organisation would do more to check the spirit of outrage... than the presence of a military force...it appears to be the natural and most effectual check upon the organised mobs which... have been levying contributions in some parts of the County.⁷⁹

The deepening crisis drew criticism of Peel in the House of Commons. In response to a question asking whether the Government 'intended to propose any measures for the relief of the labouring poor', Peel replied that individual Members of Parliament could much better deal this with than the Government. Sir J. Wrottesley immediately countered that, in his experience, individuals could do little without the cooperation of the government and as such Peel 'must go further' in assisting the local authorities. Peel rose to calm the fears of the House, even stating that Knatchbull would say that he (Peel) had done 'all he could'. The Treasury Solicitor was at Maidstone, 'at considerable expense and much inconvenience to the public service', every spare London Police Officer had been sent to Kent, and he had advised on the Lord Lieutenant to organise the yeomanry in order that 'there might be no more necessity for dispatching thither a regular military force'. Peel then explained the rationale of his policy.

⁷⁷ Maule, Maidstone to Phillips, 1 and 2 November 1830, PRO HO 40/27, f.54 and 56; Phillips to Rev. Dr. Poore, Murston, 26 October, Peel to 'The Magistrates of Maidstone', 31 October 1830, PRO HO 41/8, p.12 and 22; *Maidstone Journal*, 2 November 1830.

⁷⁸ G. Courthope, Whiligh, to Peel, 14 November, PRO HO 52/10, ff.403-8.

That, as the House had previously supported the reduction/dissolution of local yeomanry forces, 'he did not think it a little unreasonable to say, when a disturbance broke out that the government ought not to leave it to the local authorities to quell the disturbance'. It was therefore the role of Government, on behalf of the House, to provide military support, but that as the House had also supported reductions in the cavalry and the infantry, local forces should be re-established to take the pressure off the already stretched military forces. Maule's dispatch had been primarily precipitated by Peel's belief that the fires had not been caused by 'the resident population of the county' but had 'been devised by other hands, and executed by other hands', thus making them 'a national, not a local matter'.⁸⁰

Maule's brief was 'to give spirit and courage to the Magistrates, by assisting them with your advice and by cordial cooperation'. His first engagement was to attend a meeting of some 70 County Magistrates at Maidstone. The Earl of Winchelsea disclosed he had given money to 'the mob in his neighbourhood', and Knatchbull, although unwilling to discuss the notorious sentences, did state they could not have been otherwise under circumstances he 'was not at liberty to disclose'. The indiscretions of the Kentish justices would set the tone for Maule's sojourn to the south-east.⁸¹ The next two days were spent investigating the disturbances at Hollingbourne and the destruction of a threshing machine at Borden, before temporarily returning to London to attend the Admiralty Sessions. The outbreak of incendiarism in Battle prompted Maule to send Police Officer Clements thither, but the outbreak of parochial risings in the Weald actually drove Maule to personally make a short visit to Battle to assist in the investigations, he having already, albeit at a distance, advised in the Brede case. Peel, quick to respond to unfolding events in the Weald, personally visited the Commander of the Forces on 10 November and 'expressed a strong desire to send additional military aid to East Sussex'. The following day a troop of cavalry were sent to Cranbrook, with reinforcements sent to Tonbridge on the 12th to suppress the 'disorderleys' who had entered the town. Moreover, Peel

⁷⁹ Peel to Camden, 2 November, CKS U840 C250/10/8. Presumably this was also a reassertion of Peel's belief in the importance of 'the local authorities – they who have local knowledge – local experience': Peel to Camden, 18 October 1830, CKS U840 C250/10/2.

⁸⁰ *Kentish Gazette*, 12 November 1830.

⁸¹ Phillips, Home Office to Maule, Maidstone, 31 October, PRO HO 41/8, pp.24-5; Maule, Maidstone, to Phillips, 1 November, PRO HO 40/27, ff.54-5; Wells, 'Mr. William Cobbett', pp. 37-8. The meeting was not held in public therefore very little detail of the discussion ever made it into the public realm, although see: *Kent Herald*, 4 November 1830.

wrote to the Earl of Egremont, the hands-on Lord Lieutenant of Sussex, stating he believed a Yeomanry force should be raised at Hastings and Battle.⁸²

Peel, in conjunction with Lord Hill, had devised a plan to 'reinforce' the military in Kent and Sussex, with 'various troops' stationed at different places to provide rapid reaction to assist the magistracy. This burgeoning military force was to be placed under the day-to-day command of General Dalbiac, 'a most intelligent officer'.⁸³ That the General's role was first made public in a communiqué (on 13 November) from Peel to Lord Egremont was not at all surprising coming only a day after Egremont's chilling statement that:

the example [of the Weald] is so contagious and the subject so exciting to the minds of all poor men; that it is impossible to say it won't extend into the quietest and best disposed districts.⁸⁴

Peel and Hill's plan to station troops from Sandwich to Chichester was a tacit admission that the whole of the south-east was now under the grip of Swing. However, the plan did not account for the spread of crowd activity from Horsham into Surrey.⁸⁵ Despite the supposed clarity of this new system, it did not ease the fear of the local authorities. 'If you cannot send a military force', ran one letter from Heathfield, over ten miles away from the nearest station of troops, 'for God's sake, say so, without delay, in order that we may remove our families to a place of safety from a district which want of support renders us totally unable to defend'.⁸⁶ On 18 November the plan was revised; supplementary troops were drafted into Horsham from Dorchester, leaving the whole of the West of England without a cavalry force, and into 'West Sussex' from the Garrison at Portsmouth. *This military assistance was offered with the proviso that the magistrates met to devise a plan against further gatherings, and that a Yeoman Cavalry should also be formed. Whilst Peel stressed this was 'advice', it was clear it was expected to*

⁸² Maule, Maidstone, 5 November, *Idem.*, Battle, 12 November, to Phillips, PRO HO 40/27, ff.58-9 and 66-7; Peel to Earl of Egremont, Petworth, 10 November, Phillips to Sir Godfrey Webster, Battle Abbey, 11 August, PRO HO 41/8, pp.29-30 and 31; *Maidstone Journal*, 16 November 1830.

⁸³ Peel to Camden, 12 November, CKS U840 C250/10/9; Peel to Lord Egremont, Petworth, 13 November 1830, PRO HO 41/8, p.37.

⁸⁴ Earl of Egremont, Petworth to Peel, 12 November, PRO HO 52/10, f.620. Egremont's fears were confirmed. The following day he informed Peel that in the neighbourhood of Petworth many threats had been issued and that the country 'swarmed with tramps and travelers' who 'speak to cottagers and talk that revolution is certain'. Moreover on the night of the 12th an incendiary fire occurred at Coldwaltham near Arundel: Egremont to Peel, 13 November 1830, PRO HO 52/10, ff.621-2.

⁸⁵ Peel had however dispatched a police officer to Egham to help in the investigation of localized incendiary fires. According to Mr. Edgell the officer was 'very active and zealous': E. Wyatt Edgell, Milton Place, Egham to Peel, 19 November 1830, PRO HO 52/10, ff.206-8.

⁸⁶ J. and B. Hammond, *The Village Labourer*, p.188. The letter referred to was dated 14 November 1830.

be taken.⁸⁷ A day later this force was augmented with an additional squadron of Cavalry drafted into Dorking, who themselves were on the 20th sent to Guildford to prevent an expected affray. Peel had even made the 2nd Surrey Militia available to prevent any disturbance in Guildford.⁸⁸ The threat of further violence at Horsham, not least the plot to force open the County Gaol, prompted Peel to dispatch a further 40 Foot Guards from London via Reigate to act as an armed guard.⁸⁹ Peel's faith in a military solution to Swing was even manifested by advising the Arundel Bench that they should formally apply for troops so that he could 'speak' to the Commander of the Forces. However, requests made for troops in areas already well covered by the Peel-Hill plan were met with the blanket response 'apply to Dalbiac'.⁹⁰

By mid-November not even the intervention of Maule, a stronger military presence, or the promise of much tougher sentences at the forthcoming East Kent Special Sessions had stopped the powerful momentum of Swing.⁹¹ The fledgling Yeoman Cavalries in Kent were running into difficulties recruiting enough privates, not in least part due to the support of many farmers for the labourers' cause(s). The *Kent Herald* reported that only 'feudal retainers' agreed to 'a service so unpopular and useless'. Despite this opposition, the *arrangements* for embodying several troops in East Kent had by 18 November been completed; though the decision of the Canterbury MP to command one of the corps would, believed the *Kent Herald*, 'seriously affect his interests among his disappointed constituents'. The opposition in West Kent was equally entrenched. At a meeting of farmers at Rochester, convened by the High Sheriff to propose the re-formation of the Yeomanry, no one came forward to enrol in the force, despite a rousing speech from Lord Clifton. Mr. Bentley, chairman to the Kent Agricultural Association, believed that whilst landlords, clergy, and government extracted such high rents, tithes, and taxes but 'contributed nothing' towards restoring tranquillity in the country, the farmers should not be expected to co-operate. Moreover, some farmers expressed their belief that the 'swearing in of special constables and the establishment of nightly patrols were [measures] abundantly sufficient to protect themselves and keep the public peace' and

⁸⁷ Peel to Sir Walter Burrell, West Grinstead Park, Horsham, 18 November 1830, PRO HO 41/7, ff.5-8.

⁸⁸ Phillips to W. Crawford, Pipbrook, Dorking, and Magistrates of Guildford, 19 and 20 November, PRO HO 41/7, pp.77 and 79-80. Both dispatches were made in response to specific pleas, see: William Crawford, Dorking, and Guildford Bench to Peel, 19 and 20 November 1830, PRO HO 52/10, ff.204-5 and 212-3.

⁸⁹ Phillips to W. Henry Hunt, Horsham, 20 November 1830, PRO HO 41/7, pp.80-1.

⁹⁰ Phillips to W. Holmes, Arundel, 18 November, PRO HO 41/7, pp.63-4. Two days later the problems at Arundel in swearing in specials lead to a 'request' by Peel, to the magistrates, to apply for a military force: see Phillips to the Mayor of Arundel, 20 November, PRO HO 41/7, p.87. For the delegation of tasks see: Phillips to George Douglas, Chilston, Maidstone, 18 November 1830, PRO HO 41/7, p.66.

believed that peace would be restored 'in the course of a few days' (i.e. when Wellington's government resigned; this comment drew cheers from the audience), thus obviating 'the necessity for resorting to any additional force'. Camden still did not understand the depth of popular antipathy to the reformation of the yeomanry corps and instead wrote to Peel to ask whether the government would pay members of the Yeomanry both on and off duty, effectively giving them a salary in order to encourage enlistment. Peel, in response, although exasperated, felt he had 'no alternative but to make the exception'.⁹²

Peel's pleas to the Earl of Egremont, on the mass outbreak of overt demonstration in the Weald, and to Walter Burrell, upon the spread of 'outrages' into West Sussex, to similarly reform the Yeomanry were even less enthusiastically received, though this was partly predicated on the fact that the authorities in Sussex were simply too involved with the day-to-day reaction to events to invest time and effort in attempting to establish a yeomanry force they well knew would meet with almost universal derision from most farmers.⁹³ Intriguingly the Tory *Brighton Gazette* had earlier offered strong support to the newly moulded Kent Yeomanry, 'a body which ought never to have been put down', but did not mention either of Peel's two Sussex dictates.⁹⁴ Even Egremont, in response to the second appeal, believed that although it would be possible to raise such a force 'in West Sussex as far as Lewes', an admission of the certain opposition of the Wealden farmers, such a force would not be ready to act upon disturbances without arms, and then the process of arming must be done publicly for otherwise it 'might look like a declaration of war'.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Camden, Wilderness, to Peel, 23 October 1830 (9:30pm), PRO HO 52/8, ff.224-5.

⁹² *Kent Herald*, 18 November; Hammonds, *The Village Labourer*, p.188; *Times*, 13 November; Peel to Camden, 12 November, CKS U840 C250/10/9. Even as late as 26 November Camden had not given up on the idea to raise a Yeomanry despite the fact that Swing in Kent was now almost exclusively manifested through a resort to arson: Camden, Wilderness Park to Peel, 26 November 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.74-5.

J. Grey, Ramsgate to Melbourne, 23 November 1830, PRO HO 52/8, f.37: asks to raise a small troop of yeoman cavalry (20-40) to protect property in the Isle of Thanet.

⁹³ Peel, to Earl of Egremont, Petworth, 10 November, *Idem.*, to Walter Burrell, West Grinstead Park, Horsham, 18 November 1830, PRO HO 41/8, pp.39-30 and 57-8.

⁹⁴ *Brighton Gazette*, 11 November 1830.

⁹⁵ Peel to Earl of Egremont, Petworth, 10 November, Phillips to Sir Godfrey Webster, Battle Abbey, 11 November, PRO HO 41/8, pp.29-30 and 31; *Maidstone Journal*, 16 November; Egremont, Petworth to Peel, 19 November 1830, PRO HO 52/10, ff.625-6.

VII

The outbreak of machine breaking in the Ash area on 25 October combined with the universal criticism of the 'lenient' sentences stung Knatchbull into promptly informing Peel that a Special Sessions needed to be held 'speedily'.⁹⁶ Sir Edward's haste, however, was tempered by the Peel-imposed invention of Maule. The East Kent Special Sessions did not open until 25 November – four weeks after Knatchbull's decision, though this delay was partly a result of the time needed to build strong cases against those brought to trial, something especially necessary after the extraordinary series of events in the lead-in to the initial Canterbury trial. 'The magistrates are, it is understood, determined...not to suffer them to escape punishment so slight as inflicted on those who pleaded guilty at the last sessions'.⁹⁷ Their determination was further endorsed by Peel's decision, taken on 19 November, to endorse Maule's desire to act as the prosecution in the trial.⁹⁸

The myriad letters received by the Home Office stating that the respondents were to selectively pick those sent to the courts from the various Swing offenders in custody, or on recognizances or bail, all received stock, if judicially correct, replies from Peel to the effect that it was up to the courts to decide on who was actually prosecuted.⁹⁹ In reality this was bombast, Maule and the magistrates were given a totally free-hand to decide who to commit to trial, even the usual worries about the cost of bringing cases to trial was an irrelevance: 'you must not think of *expense* in considering the expediency of prosecuting', was the advice issued

⁹⁶ Knatchbull, Mersham to Peel, 27 October 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.382-3.

⁹⁷ *Times*, 26 November 1830. Depositions in the various cases of machine breaking to be tried at the Special Sessions were still being taken as late as 20 November: Deposition of Caroline Matson, Wingham, farmer's daughter, CKS Q/Sbe 121/13.

⁹⁸ Phillips, Whitehall, to Maule, Maidstone, 19 November 1830, PRO HO 41/8, ff.72-3.

⁹⁹ That is to say all Swing offenders should be indicted, whether a true bill was found or not was up to the Grand Jury. The clearest example is contained in the correspondence between Peel and W. Collingwood, a Hawkhurst magistrate: W. Collingwood, Hawkhurst to Phillips, 18 November; and Phillips to Collingwood, Hawkhurst, 19 November 1830, PRO HO 52/8, f.91-2 and 41/8 ff. 73-74. Collingwood's suggestion that it 'would be expedient to prosecute artisans, carpenters, tailors, bricklayers and a smuggler because they have nothing to do with Threshing Machines' was meditated on a fear that the involvement of artisans and those known to live in total contempt for the law was symptomatic of a more general rural insurrection, that more politicised and independent groups were starting to realise the broader political possibilities of Swing. Collingwood was also using his discretion as a magistrate in a highly nuanced way; he later found out that one man he had committed to trial was 'an excellent moral good boy'. Collingwood regretted committing him for he was 'now in Maidstone gaol with some of the greatest rascals in Kent. It will be his ruin'. Magistrates' powers of discretion are one of the least studied parts of the judicial process, an important exception is Peter King's excellent Essex-focused study *Crime, Justice and Discretion in England, 1740-1820* (Oxford, 2000). Chapters two and four provide especially insightful comment.

to Maule by Peel in the case of an alleged female arsonist. Moreover this advice was universal.¹⁰⁰

Whilst a few cases of assault and property appropriation were also tried, the Sessions was dominated by the Swing trials. Eleven prisoners were indicted for breaking various machines in the Ash area, eight prisoners for on cases of machine breaking in the Bekesbourne area (a ninth man turned King's Evidence), and five for riotous assemblage and assault at Ruckinge. Of these 24 prisoners (of whom all but two were labourers), one was transported for life, six were transported for seven years, eight were jailed for twelve months, two for nine months, one for six months, three for three months, one for one month, and one for fourteen days. Only one of the 24 was found not guilty. Knatchbull had been unequivocal: on discharging the Petty Jury he exclaimed 'he hoped the sentences passed that day would be the means of deterring persons from engaging in those lawless acts'. That East Kent would only now suffer from incendiary fires and threatening letters was not, however, a testimony to Knatchbull's more robust sentencing but a reflection that Swing, as an overt movement, had effectively already ended.¹⁰¹

Meanwhile Lord Melbourne had been installed as Home Secretary in Lord Grey's new Whig administration. If the public were expecting a more open-minded Government they were disappointed. 'Dismiss from your mind the idea... that Lord Grey is a liberal,' urged Princess Lieven. 'He is so near to becoming the very opposite that only yesterday he told me that his only wish was to be dictator for six months'.¹⁰² Melbourne fitted well into this style of Government. On his first day in office he 'sat up all night' and then rose daily at 6am 'to get through the business'.¹⁰³ On his first day in office Melbourne quickly stamped his authority on the Home Office, ordering Sir Godfrey Webster that James King, a leading member of the Crowhurst 'mob', must be sent to Gaol despite the fact that he had 'surrendered himself to the Civil Forces'. Melbourne's public, however, wasted no time in telling him what he should do. Rev. Hewett of Tunbridge Wells believed that, as the numerous assemblages 'impunity

¹⁰⁰ Phillips to Maule, 18 November 1830, PRO HO 41/8, pp.59-60.

¹⁰¹ Rough list of sentences given to 30 machine breakers, n.d. (but 25 or 26 November), Rough assessment of destroyed machines, and list of twelve prisoners' sentences, n.d. (but 25 or 26 November), Gaol Calendar, East Kent Special Sessions November, with notes of verdicts and sentences, 25 November, CKS Q/Sbe 121/14, 15 and 16; *Kent Herald*, 2 December 1830.

¹⁰² G. Le Strange (ed.), *The Correspondence of Princess Lieven and Lord Grey, Volume I* (London, 1890), p.218, cf. P. Ziegler, *Melbourne* (London, 1976), p.127.

¹⁰³ Wells, 'Mr. William Cobbett', p.37. Peel though had been Home Secretary for eight years and this experience equipped him to deal far more efficiently with the vast tide of correspondence than his successor.

increases their hardihood, and makes them suppose either that Government is indifferent to their proceedings or is too weak to put them down', a Royal Proclamation was needed which outlawed all such gatherings. Melbourne duly obliged. On 23 November Melbourne introduced two key changes in policy: firstly he insisted Maule send to the Home Office all the depositions he had gathered, and secondly, he issued, with the King's assent, a proclamation offering a blanket reward of £50 for any person whose information lead to the successful prosecution of a rioter, and £500 for the conviction of any arsonist. The proclamation was issued that evening in a specially published *London Gazette* and was circulated throughout the countryside over the following days. To Rev. Hewett's bemusement, the proclamation though did not even mention the 'attacks on the clergy' attempting to force tithe reductions.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, such rewards, as Peel had insightfully perceived, were out of tune with the occasion. Farmers who had previously either been too fearful to enrol as special constables or had actually supported the 'mob' were unlikely to change their minds for £500, a sum far less than the damage caused by many Swing fires. As Wells' has stated, even the Home Office admitted that the campaign against arson had been of little use despite its considerable expense. Melbourne's proclamation only really had power as a symbolic statement, a sign that *he* was not going to capitulate to the rioters and incendiaries.¹⁰⁵

On being appointed Home Secretary, Melbourne applied to the 'professional soldier' the Duke of Wellington for advice on tackling Swing. Wellington responded by saying that 'you cannot be too cautious in issuing arms and equipment'. If Peel had ever received the same information from Wellington, *his* Prime Minister, he certainly had ignored it. This was exactly what Melbourne wanted to hear: he already, although somewhat imperiously, believed that 'justices who clamoured for the support of troops or to raise a local militia were nuisances who deserved discouragement'. He consequently advised against the formation of any further yeoman cavalries, but was virtually powerless to decline offers made by Lord Lieutenants.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, it was after Melbourne's appointment as Home Secretary that the majority of the new Yeoman Cavalries were raised or existing cavalries augmented.¹⁰⁷ His opposition to the use of the military was also soon compromised, despite his sly criticism of Peel's pandering to those

¹⁰⁴ Phillips to Sir Godfrey Webster, Battle, 22 November, and to Maule, Maidstone, and Rev. Hewitt, Tunbridge Wells, both 23 November, PRO HO 41/8, pp. 91, 103, and 106-7; JS Hewett, Tunbridge Wells to Peel, 22 and 26 November, PRO HO 52/8, ff.41-2 and 71-2; *London Gazette*, 23 November 1830 (supplement, no. 18749).

¹⁰⁵ See note 44. Wells, 'Mr. William Cobbett', p.48.

¹⁰⁶ P. Ziegler, *Melbourne: A Biography of William Lamb* (London, 1978), pp.132-4.

magistrates 'who saw in every burnt hay-stack a sign of bloody revolution', by agreeing to the dispatch of further troops.¹⁰⁸ Melbourne had little alternative but to dispatch further troops to quell the disturbances that had spread beyond the south-east to engulf the whole of southern England.

Melbourne's preferred plan to deter, and if necessary, put down, assemblages was to advise on the universal adoption of the so-called 'Sussex Constabulary Plan'. For his native West Sussex the Duke of Richmond had proposed that a constabulary force comprising of 'shopkeepers, yeomen, and 'respectable' labourers' be enrolled. These cross-sectional forces were then to be organised into divisions with individual sections sent out 'after a manner of a military occupation by a hostile army' to the villages 'whether already rebellious or likely to become so'. Richmond's plan was speedily adopted by Lord Lennox and the Chichester Bench, and, according to the *Brighton Gazette*, was an 'entire success'. This success, however, was largely a result of the fact that Swing was, other than for occasional 'mobbings' and incendiary fires, already fizzling out in the south-east.¹⁰⁹ The only (formal) application to the Home Office by south-east local authorities to adopt the Sussex Plan was from the Lower South Aylesford Bench in Kent, writing as late as 8 December, presumably in fear that the woodmen strikes and assemblages to the north would spread into their division. Even this application was tempered with the fear that many people would refuse to be sworn.¹¹⁰

Melbourne's most violent innovation did not affect the south-east. The Special Commissions established in Hampshire, Berkshire, Wiltshire, Dorset, and Buckinghamshire were not applied to Kent and Sussex because judicial proceedings were already underway. The Kent, Sussex and Surrey Winter Assizes however were still the most important south-east Swing trials, if not the last. The Kent Winter Assizes opened on 14 December for the trial of 120 individuals, seven on charges of arson, twelve on machine breaking, one for sending a threatening letter, and twelve for riotous assembly, though the majority of the cases tried at the Assizes were not of Swing participants, with a similar Swing-non Swing balance also observed

¹⁰⁷ George Lamb, Parliamentary-Under-Secretary to various, December 1830 to end 1831, PRO HO 51/164, pp.371-486. George Lamb was Melbourne's brother.

¹⁰⁸ Ziegler, *Melbourne*, pp.133-4 and 137. For instance on 24 November Melbourne authorized the dispatch of troops from London to Epsom: Melbourne to Lord Arden, Hook, nr. Epsom, 24 November 1830, PRO HO 41/8, pp.114-5.

¹⁰⁹ Maule and Dalbiac by 21 November had already expressed their opinion to Lord Lieutenant Camden that the 'state of Kent is considerably improved'. Camden, Wilderness Park to Peel, 21 November 1830, PRO HO 52/8, f.50. See also chapter 3.

at the Sussex and Surrey Winter Assizes. Inevitably, though, press coverage almost exclusively focused on the Swing trials. Unlike the earlier Canterbury Trial, the County Assizes were not central to the way in which Swing as a movement would unfold in the south-east, for effectively the waves of machine breaking and parochial risings had effectively finished. Indeed, it was this recognition and the fact that trials had already occurred that meant Special Commissions were superfluous to the region: elsewhere they were necessary due to fears that, as Hobsbawm and Rudé put it, 'the over-tenderness of local magistrates' would rekindle the much fresher Swing spirit, thereby replicating the impact of the Canterbury Trial. This is not to say that the sentences handed out by the judges presiding over the south-eastern Assizes were in anyway more lenient, something that Peel had helped to ensure through the deployment of Maule in constructing the prosecution's argument in most of the Swing cases to be heard, thus also avoiding those charged of being acquitted on technical grounds. This investment was further backed up by the government actually funding the prosecution in many of the cases.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p.256; *Brighton Gazette*, 25 November; *Times*, 26 November; Messrs. M. and J. Scoones, Clerks to the Lower South Aylesford Bench, to Melbourne, 8 December 1830, PRO HO 52/8, ff.206-7.

¹¹¹ Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p. 258. Although as Wells correctly states this was partly motivated by the need for Lord Grey's administration to maintain the support of William IV for parliamentary reform, something that would have been jeopardized by numerous trials throughout the country highlighting the depth of popular republicanism and the entrenched position of revolutionaries: Wells, 'Mr. William Cobbett' pp.44-8.

Chapter 5: 'Swing' Conclusions

First we can easily dismiss Hobsbawm and Rudé's claim that the start of machine breaking came as a 'bolt from the blue'.¹ The Elham gang's activities had roots going back to at least the spring of 1829 when farmer Kelsey's machine was destroyed by an incendiary fire, one of a record number of fires that year. Moreover, Price's anti-threshing machine comments acted to legitimise their campaign, as did the decision by the Barham vestry. This and their incredible level of planning means that Andrew Charlesworth's remark that 'the start of the revolt of 1830 was much more tentative even than the events of 1816' and that 'there was much more the feel to these protests of testing the reaction of the authorities than there had been in 1816 and 1822' can also be dismissed.² We can also answer with a greater degree of satisfaction the often-asked question as to why Swing started in East Kent, although we should now relocate the question from Lower Hardres to Elham. Hardship in the area was no worse than elsewhere but a unique combination of factors and circumstances offer some explanation. The established resistance of threshing machines in the area was further aggravated by the aggressive marketing of threshing machines to hire by several local entrepreneurs during the harvest of 1830, thereby inflaming the passions local labourers, several of whom were highly politicised and experienced leaders probably of smuggling gangs, artisans, small farmers and by Rev. Price, whose intervention above all was responsible for their systematic campaign.

Elsewhere in 1829, other than the sustained resort to arson from October, the intensity and often-uninhibited nature of protests in particular locales, not least Sheppey and Ardingley, was something that had not occurred since 1822. The bad harvest of 1829, following on from the poor harvest in 1828, and the exceptionally harsh winter that followed were sufficient to reduce small farmers everywhere into a state of desperate decay, and all but the most 'establishment' of other farmers to press for calls for the abolition of the malt tax and hop duty. Indeed, whilst the early months of 1830 were comparatively subdued, the signs by June were sufficiently ominous for that most seasoned of rural observers Cobbett, who had in 1828 predicted with uncanny accuracy a rural uprising in the winter of 1830-1, to relate to his readers that 'it is *everywhere the same*, all is decay, and misery, and ruin...all are in a state of *general decay*...all is going on just as I anticipated'.³ The depth and universality of this 'decay' provided a rich breeding ground for renewed radical agitation, which when the revolution in France occurred was defiantly stepped

¹ Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p.98.

² Charlesworth, *A Comparative Study*, p.155.

up. Even impoverished rural labourers had the conviction to speak to each other, farmers and even strangers about political events that affected them only in abstract ways. Those who did not still knew enough about 'rights' to be carried along by the rhetoric of their politically more active comrades to do whatever was necessary to restore dignity to labouring and allow families to maintain themselves through a combination of labour and benefits. As Roger Wells has stated 'however Swing is characterised, the protests represented a calculated strategy for the ultimate objective, namely the restoration of rural communities' economic and social equilibrium', though few were the calls for the restoration of land to the landless masses.⁴

Such highly motivated individuals are central to the diffusion of Swing. Time after time the archive records the presence of men far from their homes, actively attempting to stir up hitherto quiet parishes. From the activities of Martin Carvill of the Elham gang to the role of the Horsham Radical Society in instigating disturbances in Surrey such individuals were integral at every stage to Swing's diffusion. These were not Andrew Charlesworth's linkmen of the London highway, although in some instances coach and carrier routes certainly diffused news of events elsewhere and probably were instrumental in a handful of events, including the first disturbance at Kirdford and possibly Hurstpierpoint. The most important source of diffusion, however, was the ultra mobile nature of many gangs. This should not be too surprising. Smuggling, which also relied on the support of smaller farmers, poaching, and less narrowly defined criminal gangs travelled vast distances in a night's work. That the Elham gang were also equipped with pistols and engaged in violent oaths suggests their involvement in at least organised poaching, but considering Elham's reputation as a notorious smuggling centre it is highly probable that they were connected to the ultra-violent Aldington Gang of smugglers. More localised work is needed to examine these probable personnel links.⁵

As noted in the introduction, *Captain Swing* is still central to our understanding of the *weapons* of protest in the English countryside. Their tabulations listed seventeen supposedly different forms of Swing incident that, apart from animal maiming which they claimed 'never played a significant part in England and is probably best neglected', have formed the basis of all subsequent protest work.⁶ Their analysis, for the south-east at least, is spot on. Few cases of animal maiming were reported during Swing and whilst such cases should not be neglected it is worth considering that such an absence is striking considering the importance of this most beastly

³ *County Chronicle*, 30 March; *Kentish Gazette*, 10 May and 23 July; *Rochester Gazette*, 8 June; *Cobbett's Political Register*, 12 June 1830.

⁴ Wells, 'Moral Economy', p.235.

⁵ M. Waugh, *Smuggling in Kent and Sussex 1700-1840* (Newbury, 1998), pp.81-3

⁶ Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, pp.80 and 301.

of protest crimes in East Anglia during the 1830's and 1840's. However, Hobsbawm and Rudé's exact delineation of seventeen types of Swing incident needs to be queried. Many parochial risings or gatherings of labourers had multiple objectives and took many simultaneous forms, they were not simply 'poorhouse riots' (type number 5) or 'wages meetings, riots' (type number 3) but often a combination of twelve of Hobsbawm and Rudé's Swing types. This is a problem in one crucial sense. It is meaningless to attempt to quantify such gatherings. Even if each gathering was categorised according to its primary characteristic – an almost impossible task due to archival limitations – this would distort the complex nature of many gatherings. I have, however, attempted to list all recorded Swing incidents in order to show not only that there were far more than previously considered but also that many areas thought to be Swing free were also effected. However, any attempt to quantify the number of parishes effected by Swing would be rendered useless by the usual archival deficiencies and by the very mobile nature of gangs: should parishes they obviously traversed through be included and similarly should parishes which provided manpower for incidents elsewhere but which were not hosts themselves to an incident be included? Moreover, many parishes 'rose' on many separate occasions, some even day after day for considerable periods. Such a phenomena is complicated by the involvement of mobile figures in Swing crowds: once their parishes were 'righted' they often assisted elsewhere, in parishes where they would not be recognised and consequently often not recorded. Quite simply the complex nature of most Swing gatherings and gangs cannot be reduced to hard statistics. Similarly, quantifying discreet incidents, for instance arson and machine breaking, is fraught with difficulties, some of which have been discussed in the introduction. Bearing in mind these problems, some tentative findings are apparent. Arson in the period before the start of machine breaking was far more intense than previously thought, not least in the Sevenoaks area *black spot* (see table 5:1). The period from the start of machine breaking (24 August) until the end of December also saw a far greater resort to arson (table 5:2). Indeed, for 1830, Surrey witnessed at least a 67% greater resort to incendiarism than claimed by Hobsbawm and Rudé, whilst for Sussex the figure rises to 73% and in Kent, already considered to have witnessed by far the greatest resort to incendiarism of any Swing county, 77%.⁷ These figures are also probably conservative, and do not include the many general and non-specified accounts of fires.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 304-5 and 312-358.

Table 5:1: Arson, 1 January – 23 August 1830

| | Hobsbawm and Rudé | Revised |
|--------|-------------------|---------|
| Kent | 7 ^a | 18 |
| Surrey | 1 | 3 |
| Sussex | 0 | 3 |

^a Kent total excludes one fire listed as occurring between 3 and 28 August that actually occurred on 28 August and is consequently included in table 5:2.

Table 5:2: Arson, 24 August – 31 December 1830

| | Hobsbawm and Rudé | Revised |
|--------|-------------------|---------|
| Kent | 49 | 81 |
| Surrey | 20 | 32 |
| Sussex | 33 | 54 |

John Archer has discovered a similar pattern for Suffolk and Norfolk, where Hobsbawm and Rudé's figures of five and twelve respectively have been revised to nineteen and 28. Whilst all counties would probably yield higher totals if revised, none of the Swing counties would exceed Surrey's total of 35 fires in 1830, thereby positioning the south-east by some margin as the region most plagued by incendiarism in 1830.⁸ The number of threshing machines broken is (even) less clear-cut. For much of Sussex reports are too general and give no indication of how many machines or precisely where they were destroyed, moreover in many cases it is unclear whether the machines were broken by assemblages or by farmers acting in response to threats. Indeed machines broken by farmers in some senses should also be included in totals of machines destroyed for they were equally casualties of Swing. For Kent, where these barriers are less severe, a result of more extensive press coverage and better judicial documentation as a result of the intensive investigations carried out into machine breaking at Elham, Ash, and on Thanet, I have recorded 52 destroyed machines, not including those destroyed by farmers and by incendiary fires.⁹

So what of the revised geography of Swing? As we have noted, the centrality of highly mobile gangs and individuals in the diffusion of Swing makes it difficult to exactly map out the areas, let alone the parishes, that were impacted upon by Swing events. These considerations combined with evidential problems, not least the often ambiguous and contradictory nature of many reports, do provide a major barrier to offering a systematic geography of Swing: indeed it

⁸ Archer, *By a Flash*, pp.70-1; Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, pp.304-5.

would be correct to say that, as every parish was both psychologically effected and impacted upon the campaign to suppress the movement such exercises are fundamentally flawed. Despite these important problems it is possible to offer some conclusions that offer a substantive revision of Hobsbawm and Rudé's mapping.¹⁰ Firstly, in all areas in which they record incidents Swing was more intense. For instance in the area between Maidstone, Sittingbourne and Ashford the crucial events that heralded the arrival of Swing in West Kent impacted upon far more parishes over a wider area, with many parishes visited by the mobile gangs upon several subsequent days. Secondly, several gaps in Hobsbawm and Rudé's map can be filled in. The extensive area between Lenham and Canterbury, whilst seemingly free from the activities of Swing gangs, did witness several incendiary fires, cases of machine breaking, including threshing machines, and threats to farmers. Kentish London and north-east Surrey were impacted upon by numerous incendiary fires, a plethora of threatening letters, and were also visited by agent provocateurs. Moreover, as Professor Wells has recently stated, a gang of some 1,000 people drawn from these Metropolitan fringe parishes on the morning of 9 November passed through Southwark and were only stopped from entering the City by 'a huge posse of Metropolitan policemen'.¹¹ The parishes between Lewes and Hurstpierpoint are similarly not represented in *Captain Swing*, but in actuality several of these parishes were visited by Swing gangs and subjected to incendiary fires.

A number of theoretical and non-theoretical conclusions can be drawn from the attempts to suppress Swing. Too often the nature of authority in rural England has been rendered rather simplistically: like a 'rustic' English landscape painting, the gentry (authority) and the poor rarely meet. The poor, however, did not rest submissively merge into the background whilst the privileged aristocracy strutted confidently in the foreground. Ruling rural England was a process of negotiation, not only between central and local governments but also between local policy implementation and those whom such policies impacted upon. Those farmers who refused to be sworn as special constables well knew that even by agreeing to be sworn their decision would have implications upon those in their parish. Similarly the initial interventions of Rev. Price in a not uncommon gleaning dispute were in stark contrast to his later incriminating remarks to the meeting of agriculturalists: every belief, every moral, every policy was played out against a background where the labourers and artisans of the Elham area hung upon his every public word and deed. Even the utterance of a single word could have multiple interpretations and subsequent

⁹ See Appendices 1.1 and 1.2.

¹⁰ See Maps 1.2 to 1.6.

¹¹ Wells, 'Social Protest', p.161.

implications. Such was the sophistication and knowingness of many of the rural proletariat that the interpretation(s) of not only the spoken but also the written word was open to manipulation.¹²

By locating detailed localised studies within a broader regional framework these chapters show that not only is the 'microhistory' approach useful in clarifying the nature of authority but it is also useful in attempting to bridge the conceptual gap between purely institutional and purely social histories. This approach, despite being well suited to the explanation of particular events, and the ways in which 'events' can have often unexpected and profound effects, heavily relies on the balance of possibilities against probabilities. Of course these probabilities do rest heavily upon the existing historical literature in the delineation of what was likely, what was probable, and, as such, tend to reinforce rather than challenge certain aspects of the way we tend to think about plebeian attitudes and beliefs. As EP Thompson has suggested, under the theoretical influence of Bourdieu, within lived environments 'all parties str[i]ve to maximise their own advantages' but within the context of a rapidly unfurling movement which generated seemingly infinitely mutable social alignments it was not always clear how this could be achieved. The struggle is often not so much an external one but an internal one; the struggle where our position within socially manifested struggles is battled out.¹³ To better understand Swing we therefore need to understand the cultural dynamics and meanings already invested in individual acts of protest.

¹² For examples of the ways in which plebeian interpretations of 'text', both verbal and scriptural, can have profound impacts see C. Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. J. Tedeschi and A. Tedeschi, (Baltimore, 1980) and B. Reay, *Last Rising*.

¹³ E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common*, p.102.

Chapter 6: Grain and Sedition, 1790-1801

I: 'Damning the little bushels'¹: 1790-1794

With the health of Frederick Bettesworth, an elderly Surrey labourer and gardener, in a state of perpetual decline, George Bourne, a gentleman and his employer, decided to record for perpetuity Bettesworth's many anecdotes. Whilst Bourne's exercise privileged Bettesworth's knowledge as picturesque, and often amusingly arcane, what survived in published form provides a rare insight into the long-standing attitudes of the rural poor. 'He never read a newspaper... how should he have learnt anything about the political ferment which was spreading through the towns of all England', pompously stated Bourne, but Bettesworth well understood the economic realities of even international politics. When in 1898 war broke out between Spain and America he warned that war always lead to a rise in the price of bread, but also realised that the rise in the price of labour effected by the calling out of the reserves would partly mitigate this.²

Whilst Bettesworth never experienced the like of the severe famine conditions of 1795-6 and 1800-1, his grasp of market dynamics was rooted in an understanding first developed by labourers during the American War of Independence and the Revolutionary Wars. The cost of bread and the level of agricultural wages were, throughout the latter eighteenth and early nineteenth-century, the two most important factors in determining the standard of living of the rural proletariat.³ When therefore on 1 February 1793 Revolutionary France declared war on England, the reported delight of George III was not shared by the majority of his subjects.⁴

Even before the war, bread was central to the two main outbreaks of overt protest in the south-east. In early 1790, when the price of grain rose rapidly, 100-200 of 'the peasantry' assembled at Petworth armed with large sticks to complain at the price of flour. With a gallon loaf retailing at fourteen and a half pence, equivalent to a days wages, the crowd claimed 'that they might as well be killed at once, as starved to death', adding 'they would have flour cheaper (as there was no scarcity) or *they would Grind the Miller*'. After remonstrating with the crowd, Mr Johnston, a local magistrate, read the Riot Act. The crowd, however, proceeded to a baker's shop and purchased some loaves, which upon being weighed were found to be deficient. The fine levied upon the baker was given to the

¹ Quote from: *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 17-December 1792.

² G. Bourne, *Memoirs of a Surrey Labourer: A Record of the Last Years of Frederick Bettesworth* (1907, 1930 edition), pp.39-40.

³ For a useful outline of this condition see Wells, *Wretched Faces*, chapter 2; and, *Idem.*, 'The Development of the English Rural Proletariat', especially p.29-34.

⁴ W. Armstrong, *Farmworkers* (1988) p.44.

crowd, who spent it not on bread but at the Angel Inn. Emboldened, the crowd threatened they would soon assemble again. During the following week their threats were reinforced with a 'seditious' paper stuck up in Petworth town. The crowd, however, did not re-assemble.⁵ Popular hostility to the rise in the price of wheat, seen largely as a problem of farmers withholding supplies, manifested themselves in the Winter of 1790-1 with a spate of incendiary fires on agricultural premises in East Sussex and Surrey.⁶

It was not until the early autumn of 1792 that overt opposition to the marketing practices of grain again assumed serious proportions. Despite reports that harvest wages had risen by as much as half and that a general scarcity of labour existed in upland parts of Kent and Sussex, problems with forestalling and regrating of grain prompted the *Sussex Weekly Advertiser* to print out the parliamentary statutes against these practices. Magistrates were sternly reminded of their moral economy responsibilities: it was their 'duty it is to promote and secure the public good' and that they 'should never overlook offences of this nature'. The response of dealers, millers and farmers, however, was to standardize bushel sizes by adopting the so-called Winchester Bushel, containing a legally standard measure of eight gallons, less than the customary measures, which varied between nine and twelve and a half gallons.⁷ In early October most of the principal farmers met at Lewes and resolved unanimously to deal only in the Winchester Bushel. Later in the month their West Sussex counterparts met at Horsham and made the same decision, claiming not only that the existing bushel was different in every market, thus creating barriers to trade, but also that the old bushel 'held too much' and that consequently 'heaped wealth on the rich; but robbed the poor [i.e. purchasers]'.⁸ The *Sussex Weekly Advertiser* warned that 'our farmers', evidently mindful of the depth of popular attachment to customary measures, fear it will create them 'a great deal of trouble'.

Such predictions proved correct. At Alfriston, between Lewes and Eastbourne, in November a number of labourers formed an association with the avowed intention to

⁵ *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 10 and 17 May 1790.

⁶ *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 26 July and 13 December; PRO Assi(ze) 94/1348, Indictment of John Duke. The summer of 1790 had also witnessed at least one incendiary fire on a faggot stack at Heathfield: *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 26 July 1790.

⁷ The figures given for customary bushel sizes are for West Country markets, no systematic work has been undertaken regarding the size of south-eastern customary measures. As early as 1670 the Winchester Bushel was adopted as the only legally recognised bushel size. Despite this, as Messrs Sheldon, Randall, Charlesworth and Walsh, have shown at Gloucester the law was enforced whilst preserving the 'customary' measure by packing the Winchester bushel tight with corn then poured very slowly, so as to achieve a lower density but greater volume, into the old bushel: R. Sheldon, A. Randall, A. Charlesworth and D. Walsh, 'Popular Protest and the Persistence of Customary Corn Measures: Resistance to the Winchester Bushel in the English West', in A. Randall and A. Charlesworth (eds.), *Markets, Market Culture and Popular Protest in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Liverpool, 1996), p.34.

⁸ *Times*, 8 September; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 6 August, 15 and 29 October, and 3 December 1792.

abolish the 'flat' bushel and to oblige the farmers to sell them wheat at five shillings per bushel. After 30-40 of the association met several times in a public-house, a planned meeting of between 200 and 300 people was thwarted by the refusal of the publican to allow them to use his premises. Apparently the men did not meet again. On 11 December during the night three men harassed the farmers in the neighbourhood of Bognor and Bersted by 'whooping and hallowing' under their windows and 'damning the little bushels'. The men shot one farmer who dared to attempt to 'reason' with them. In Kent farmers took the unusual step of calling a general meeting specifically to increase the level of wages, presumably under the fear of reprisals.⁹ Hostility to the new bushel carried on into the winter of 1793. In December 'incendiary letters' were sent to numerous Northiam (a rural parish near the Sussex-Kent border) farmers. George Lord, Thomas Pix, Thomas Perego, amongst others, all received notice, written in the same hand, that unless the measures by which they sold their grain were changed, their corn stacks and houses would be set on fire during the night. Whilst a 'considerable' reward was offered nobody, was apprehended.¹⁰

The backdrop to the plebeian, and essentially rural, resistance to the Winchester bushel was that of an intensified and extensive campaign to disseminate the written works of the so-called urban artisans' patron saint, Tom Paine.¹¹ Paine's *The Rights of Man* was published in two parts, the first in 1791, the second in 1792, and was soon widely on sale, even in the smallest of villages. In 1793 it was estimated that the second edition alone had already sold 200,000 copies. In the week preceding Christmas 1792 the *Sussex Weekly Advertiser* reported that two men had been seen vending copies of Paine's works in several villages in the eastern parts of Sussex. At the same time an 'eminent' farmer at Leigh, West Kent, was apprehended and bound over to the next Quarter Session for posting a 'violent and inflammatory' notice on the church door entitled 'The Rights of Man'. Similarly the parish clerk of Shipley, Sussex, was burnt in effigy for publicly defending Paine's populist opus.¹² The banning of *The Rights of Man* and the forced exile of Paine in 1793 were both products of, as EP Thompson sees it, 'a sustained effort by authority to meet the reformers in the field'. Such feeling manifested itself in the promotion of counter-revolutionary societies and the gentry sponsoring of anti-Paine spectacles, including the aforementioned display at Shipley.¹³ Throughout December 1792 and into the following January effigies of

⁹ *Ibid.*, 29 Oct, 26 Nov, 3, 10 and 17 December; *Kentish Gazette*, 4 December 1792.

¹⁰ *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 30 December; *Maidstone Journal*, 31 December 1793.

¹¹ R. Wells, 'The Militia Mutinies of 1795' in J. Rule (ed.), *Outside the Law: Studies in Crime and Order* (Exeter, 1982), p.35; C. Calhoun, *The Question of Class Struggle: Social Foundations of Popular Radicalism during the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford, 1982), p.48;

¹² E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1968), pp.93-99, 117; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 24 December; *Kentish Gazette*, 28 December; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 31 December 1792.

¹³ EP Thompson, *The Making*, p.121.

Paine, invariably holding a copy of *The Rights of Man*, were variously tried, burnt, hung, mocked, and even passed by 'in silent contempt' in both towns and small villages alike.

Despite this wave of populist activity seditious activity was not in any meaningful sense diminished in the southeast. Throughout 1793 the local press reported not only the circulation of seditious handbills, but also numerous cases of the uttering of seditious expressions in both towns and villages. John Thatcher, a Sandhurst labourer, was indicted at the Kent Lent Assizes in 1794 for sending a threatening letter addressed to 'the Gentleman and farmers' of Sandhurst, using the provocative pseudonym of Thomas Paine. As was so often the case with the alleged authors of such apocalyptic epistles, Thatcher was acquitted on the lack of evidential proof.¹⁴ However, it is from a group of parishes bordering the Romney Marsh in Kent that the most convincing proof of the politicisation of even the most remote parishes is offered. On 5 February 1794 David Masters, along with two accomplices,¹⁵ was apprehended as the architect of a revolutionary society. Masters' society was based on a heady mix of political doctrine and practical reason. Masters was not the usual politicised urban artisan but a parishioner of the rural Kennardington intent on a peasant's revolt style insurrection. Masters' was indicted on two charges: firstly, that he wished well to the government of France, that he hoped the French would soon land, and that whenever they did he, and many others, including all the Dissenters (he claimed) would immediately join them; secondly, that the King should be compelled to raise the price of labour, that no tradesman should hold land for more than the annual value of £10, that no farmer should possess any farm of more than £100 per annum, and that no clergyman should hold a benefice of greater than £100. The first steps Masters had planned to carry his revolutionary scheme into operation were to mould scythes into lance-like weapons with which they would take possession of the several batteries on the channel coast. At the following Kent Lent Assizes, Masters was found guilty on both charges and sentenced to two years' imprisonment.¹⁶

However, before 1795 covert forms of protest were both more common and sustained in the town and countryside alike, with arson in particular the most visible form of protest deployed in the south-east. Between 1790 and October 1794, of the fourteen

¹⁴ For Thatcher: PRO Assi 94/1387, indictment of John Thatcher, Kent Lent Assizes 1794. Other notable examples of rural sedition include the case of John Hollis of Watlington, Kent, at the Kent Lent Assizes 1793, found guilty and imprisoned for three months for uttering seditious and treasonable expressions against the King and Government; see PRO Assi 94/1374. For urban cases see *Kentish Gazette*, 5 February and 11 November, and *Maidstone Journal* 18 June 1793.

¹⁵ Masters accomplices were William Beale, of Warehorne, and William Barling of Orlestone. A few days later William Chittenden a Warehorne labourer was similarly committed to St Dunstan's House of Correction in Canterbury.

¹⁶ *Maidstone Journal*, 11 February and 25 March; *Kentish Gazette*, 2, 11 and 14 February 1794; PRO Assi 94/1387 calendar and indictments of Masters, Barling, Beale and Cruttenden; Waugh, *Smuggling in Kent and Sussex*, see chapter 1.

cases of arson identified half were against agricultural targets, with six of the other seven against houses.¹⁷ Arson was not only resorted to in protest at high grain prices in 1790, but was also used as a tool of protest in many personal disputes: the example of Mary Kettle is instructive. Mary was committed to Fordwich gaol for maliciously setting on fire two beds of her master, the Rev. Stephenson. Whilst Stephenson may have been unpopular with much of the parish, Kettle's act was personal and not intended as an act with wider social protest overtones.¹⁸ However, in many cases, not only between 1790 and 1810 but throughout the whole period, the evidence is too weak to suggest either that the act was intended as a purely personal revenge, or was intended to be the administration of community justice, with many cases of arson betraying no discernible protest element. The family of George Broadbridge at Seasalter, near Whitstable, were awoken from their sleep by smoke coming into their chambers: it was soon discovered that a place below the stairs had been set on fire, and attempts had been made to kindle fires in other rooms. The back door had been forced open and various articles stolen; clearly the burglar was attempting to hide the burglary by firing the house. Another form of arson with no protest element involved the attempt to defraud insurance companies. At the Surrey Lent Assizes William Clarke was committed for trial at the Surrey Lent Assizes in 1794 for setting fire to his own house in order to claim the insurance money, however, as per usual in such cases, the lack of evidence beyond the circumstantial led to a verdict of not guilty.¹⁹ Arson, if not exactly common, was not an oddity in the south-east of the early 1790s.²⁰

Whilst arson was the most *visible* form of covert protest deployed in the south-east before 1795, it was certainly not the only kind. In terms of the level of recorded incidents, arson was numerically no more important than animal maiming and only marginally more important than other forms of knowable covert protest. Whilst animal maiming in the south-east never reached the levels attained in East Anglia in the 1830's and 1840's, in Kent and Sussex in the 1790's it did match the East Anglian levels of the period 1815 to 1830.²¹ Interestingly attacks against horses comprised eleven of the fourteen cases recorded between 1790 and the end of 1794, presumably a function of both their economic value and the important but potentially fraught relationship between grooms and plough teams with

¹⁷ For details of individual cases see Appendix 2.3.

¹⁸ Fordwich, being a Cinque Port, was a separate legal jurisdiction. Arson was invariably tried at the Assizes, however it was essentially down to the committing magistrate as to what legal procedures to take; the Mayor of Fordwich took the most unusual step of deciding to summarily convict Kettle for arson. *Kentish Gazette*, 30 November 1790.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 20 August 1793; PRO Assi 31/17, Agenda Book, Surrey Lent Assize 1794. No indictment exists for Clarke and his case did not appear on the Calendar.

²⁰ For details of all recorded cases of arson in the period see Appendix 2.3.

²¹ Archer, *By a Flash and a Scare*, pp.199-203. See Appendix 2.3. The line between animal maiming and animal cruelty, as Archer as noted, is very fine. I have adopted his method of using the definitions as set out in the Black Act.

their animals.²² An equal nuisance to victims was the malicious cutting of their 'plants', or, as I have labelled it, 'plant maiming'. Attacks on hop gardens or orchards, important living capital assets, were potentially more financially punishing for the victim than incendiary fires and were recognised and proscribed as so in the notorious 'Black Act'.²³

II: *The First Grain Crisis: 1794-1796*

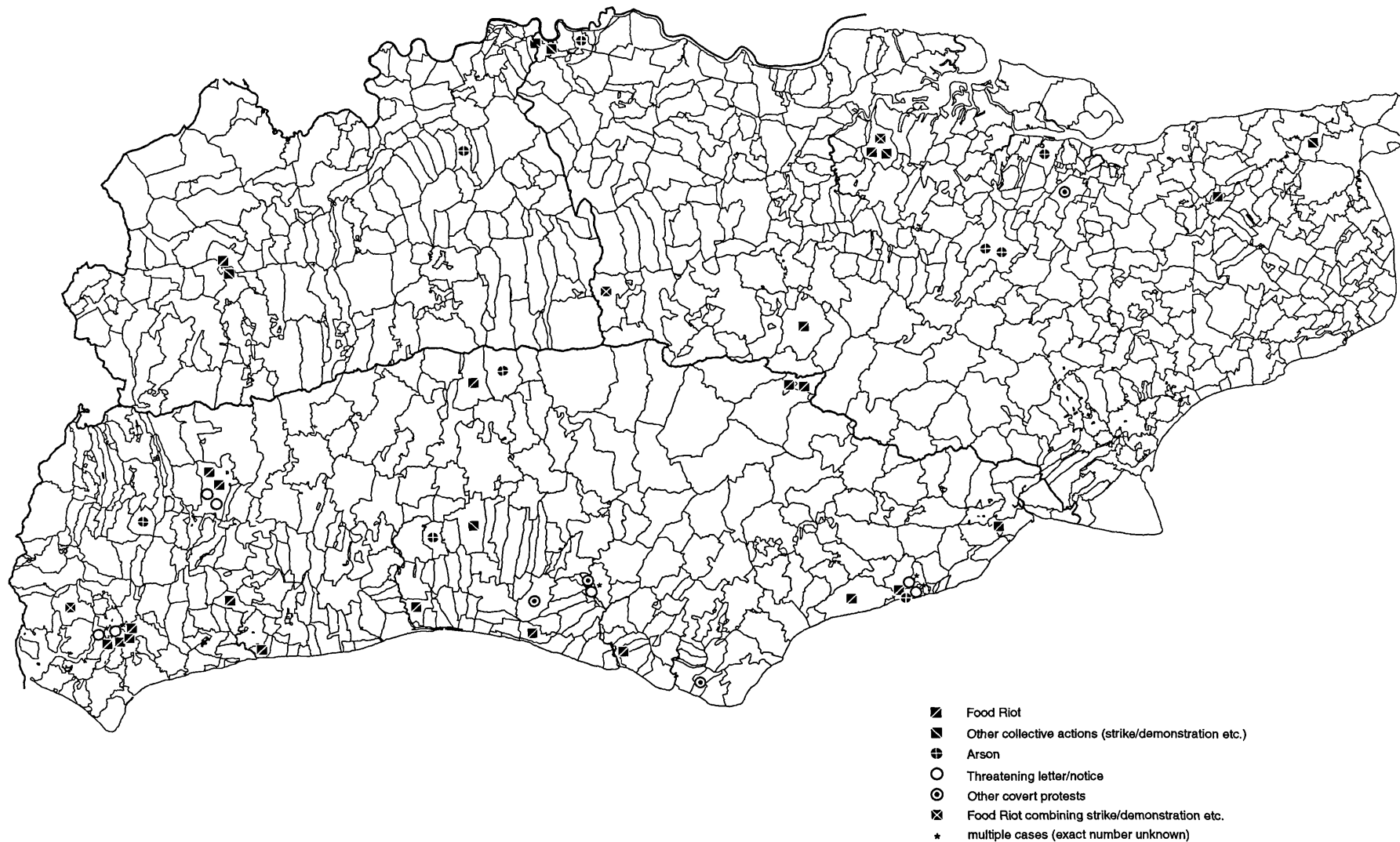
1795 has been identified as a watershed in the history of the English poor law. The dramatic rise in the price of all provisions, especially wheat, heralded an unparalleled resort to both parochial relief and organised charity. The most famous of the many relief schemes instigated in 1795 was the Speenhamland scheme, a sliding scale of relief in relation to the price of bread devised by Berkshire magistrates' meeting at Speenhamland. Despite this recognition, much social policy innovation was led neither by the Government or boards of magistrates but by parish vestries acting in regard to their own particular parochial needs. Even before the rapid rise in the price of foodstuffs in late 1794, rising poor relief expenditure, a trend discernible since the 1760s, had led to attempts to regularise relief and thus stem the tide of increasing poor rates. The result was, as Snell has noted, that from about 1780 relief was no longer consistently 'generous, flexible, and humane'.²⁴

²² Archer, *By a Flash and a Scare*, pp.199-203 and 211-4. See Appendix 2.3. The line between animal maiming and animal cruelty, as Archer as noted, is very fine. I have adopted his method of using the definitions as set out in the Black Act. For the bond and frictions between workmen, especially lads, and their horses, albeit in the very different context of East Yorkshire see: S. Caunce, *Amongst Farm Horses: Farm Servants in East Yorkshire* (Stroud, 1991); *Idem.*, 'Farm Servants and the Development of Capitalism in English Agriculture', *Agricultural History Review*, 45 (1997).

²³ Even the taking of wood from 'parks, woodlands, copses and hedgerows', 'possibly the most common way in which the law and rights of landed property were infringed' so claims Bob Bushaway, was surrounded by a 'certain amount of ambivalence'. This ambiguity arose from whether such acts were malicious damage, implying a degree of wantonness, or theft; if the act was considered to be malicious it could be prosecuted under the ruthless Black Act. R. Bushaway, 'From Custom to Crime: Wood-Gathering in Eighteenth and early Nineteenth-Century England: A Focus for Conflict in Hampshire, Wiltshire and the South', in J. Rule (ed.) *Outside the Law*, pp.67 and 78. Whilst this is not the place to fully consider problems in detecting cases of plant maiming certain factors are worth noting. Firstly, it was not always physically obvious and consequently could remain concealed. For instance malicious damage to a hedge could also look like animal damage, storm damage or even the bungled result of attempted wood stealing. Secondly, the value of the produce of gardens and domestic orchards to cottagers meant that malicious damage to such plants was an effective method of intra-class protest. The wilful causing of damage to, say, a dozen turnips would quite possibly be left unreported to the magistrates; the costs of using judicial law, as opposed to community justice, and the fear of reprisals were powerful weapons in not reporting any 'crimes'. Thirdly, the ambiguous nature of much evidence means that many cases of plant maiming may have been reported as wood and plant stealing due to their being no clear evidence of a malicious motive.

²⁴ M. Neuman, *The Speenhamland County: Poverty and the Poor Laws in Berkshire, 1782-1834* (New York, 1982). K. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England 1660-1900* (Cambridge, 1985), p.107.

Map 2.1: All Protests During the 1st Grain Crisis: December 1794 to June 1796



The main expedient resorted to by burdened parishes was to erect, or purchase, workhouses. At Dymchurch, a small but densely populated coastal parish in the Romney Marsh, early in 1791 the vestry voted to purchase a building to centrally house the poor, resolving later in the year to enlarge it to accommodate all the parish poor. Completion of the works in late 1791 led to the withdrawal of the weekly payment to the elderly, widows and illegitimate children, thereby forcing those who resisted being placed in the poorhouse to seek an alternative method of subsistence. In Surrey the vestry at Reigate Foreign (Redhill), after a failed attempt to unite with the town of Reigate, proposed to form a Gilbert's Union of five or six neighbouring parishes and erect a central manufactory to 'employ paupers' and 'therefore to reduce the poor rates'. Betchworth, one of the invited parishes declined the offer, instead deciding to build its own workhouse.²⁵ At Weybridge, already with a workhouse, the vestry resolved that all money earned by the poor in the house was to go to the Mistress of the house; the poor in the house were also not to go out to work without the prior consent of the parish officers. The scheme adopted at Rye was even more oppressive: a work-room was deemed necessary to 'employ the idle profligate (sic) poor of the said parish who refuse to work and maintain their families'; in other words the able-bodied poor were to be put into forced employment or lose all relief, an admission in itself that the poor law was being used to support the able-bodied.²⁶

Another mode of attempting to bring poor relief under control was an extensive resort to the laws of settlement. Landau suggests that between 1778 and 1792 3.75% of families in the rural parishes of Sittingbourne were brought before the justices because they had moved from one parish to another, and that, probably, four-fifths of newly immigrant married men were so examined.²⁷ No clearer statement of intent exists than a scheme proposed at Rye in April 1790. A list was created of persons who were to 'apply to their respective parishes where they are legally settled'; those who did not produce certificates or 'other securities' within a month were examined by the magistrates as to their settlement. The Midhurst vestry were even more forthright, all persons entering the parish without a settlement certificate were immediately removed to their parish of settlement. Similarly in Weybridge complaints were made to the surveyor that some of the men employed on the roads were non-parishioners; relief was to be limited to parishioners, and all efforts would

²⁵ Dymchurch Vestry Minutes 27 February, 31 May, 24 June and 1 November 1791, CKS P125/8/1; Reigate Foreign Vestry Minute 17 March 1790, S[urrey] H[istory] C[entre] 3537/2/1; Betchworth Vestry Minute, 27 April 1791, SHC P22/5/71 part i.

²⁶ Weybridge Vestry Minutes, 10 April and 2 June 1792, SHC 2384/3/4, part i; Rye Vestry Minute, 28 December 1791, ESCRO PAR 467/12/1/2.

²⁷ N. Landau, 'The Laws of Settlement and the Surveillance of Immigration in Eighteenth-century Kent', *Continuity and Change*, 3, 3 (1988), p. 402.

be made to prevent potential charges gaining settlement.²⁸ Such attempts to reduce poor law expenditure were thrown into chaos though by the famine conditions between late 1794 and the spring of 1796.

The hay harvest of 1794 was exceptionally hot, a problem that, when combined with the reported lack of harvest labourers, fuelled worries that not all the hay would be mowed before the corn was ripe. Despite such fears the corn harvest started exceptionally early as the 'unremittant sun unseasonally ripened immature grains of all varieties'. The wheat was thus deficient in quantity, if not quality, and was even found to thresh badly. However, a retrospective government survey related that in parts of Kent the wheat harvest was actually above average. Partly because of the early finish to the harvest in mid-August, the ground was prepared earlier and the winter wheat consequently sown earlier: however, persistent rain in October and almost continual sub-zero temperatures between December and March either destroyed or retarded the growth of much of the young crop.²⁹ After a prolonged freeze between 20 and 25 January, the ensuing thaw of the winter snow fall caused the worst floods in two decades. Most of the arable land between Ashford and Sandwich, some of the most fertile in England, and the most important and extensive grain belt in the south-east, was flooded when the River Stour breached its banks. The coastal plains of East and West Sussex were also inundated when the quick snow thaw on the Weald and South Downs swelled river levels to an horrendous extent. No sooner had the floodwaters partially dissipated in early March then a series of severe frosts ruined much of the crop left on the wetlands.³⁰

Despite the deficient harvest the surplus from 1793 helped partly even out supplies, but the price of wheat still rose steadily throughout the autumn, forcing the real incomes of consumers downwards. On Tuesday 11 November 1794 a 'number' of labourers assembled at Funtington to demand two shillings a day for 'thrashers, other workmen and labourers'. It was no coincidence that their strong unionist mentality was combined with the 'moral economy' symbolism of stopping farmers' wagons, probably destined for nearby Portsmouth. Four 'ringleaders' were indicted at the West Sussex Quarter Sessions for illegal combination and riotous assembly, and, despite their pleas to the contrary, were found guilty. The Judge, however, presumably in anticipation of other disturbances over the

²⁸ Rye Vestry Minute, 28 April 1790, ESCRO PAR 467/12/1/2; Midhurst Vestry Minute, 26 November 1794, WSCRO PAR 138/12/1; Weybridge Vestry Minute, 6 November 1794, SHC 2384/3/4 part i.

²⁹ *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 7 July 1794; R. Wells, *Wretched Faces: Famine in Wartime England 1763-1803* (Gloucester, 1988), pp.36-37; *Maidstone Journal*, 18 November and 2 December 1794.

³⁰ *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 26 January and 2 February; *Kentish Gazette*, 30 January and 13 March; *Maidstone Journal*, 3 February 1795.

winter, discharged the men; the lower orders were not to become clamorous in their demands, for the gentry would see to their well-being in such times of distress.³¹

Before the trial the gentry of West Sussex received another wake-up call: on 6 December a wheat-barn was fired and destroyed at Heyshott. The £400 reward offered by the Borough of Midhurst and the Sun Fire Office, by far the highest reward yet offered in Sussex in cases of incendiarism, sent out a clear message, complaints of distress must be made through official channels - protest would not be tolerated. Towards the end of December threatening letters were posted to Mr. Hamman at Dunkton and Mr. Dale at nearby Petworth, both millers. The letters, both in the same hand, claimed that the Millers and Farmers 'are all agreed to starve us poor' and that Dale was 'one that pinches us to a high degree'. The anonymous writer threatened that 'your Mill will be pul'd downe and your come and flower will be took away for we will not worke hard and starve much longer' and that 'we will surer fight than starve'. The *Sussex Weekly Advertiser* did not publicise the occurrence until 16 March, with the warning that 'when the hands of the affluent are every where stretched forth for the assistance of the needy... the violent behaviour of a petulant multitude, deserve... the severest infliction of the penal statutes'.³²

Unsurprisingly the many local disputes that inevitably occurred between labourers and farmers and parish vestries went unreported through fear of stoking up insurrectionary fears. The case of John Edgvane is instructive. When Edgvane, a labourer, was apprehended as a rogue and a vagabond in the rural Surrey parish of Witley in late January, he had been 'begging' under the false pretence of loss by fire. Clearly the tensions engendered by the severe conditions were manifested in increasingly desperate pleas for relief and increasingly moralistic paternalist edicts regarding relief. Indeed, such was the fear of losing control that on the 24 January 40 soldiers were sent to guard a routine delivery of bread sent from Queenborough, in the Isle of Sheppy, to the nearby garrison at Sheerness.³³

The heavy frosts of January meant that the ground was virtually unworkable, leaving many field labourers out of employment. At Hythe, in addition to a general subscription, William Deedes ordered that all those out of employ should be supplied with provisions at half-cost, for which he would pay the balance. At Hernhill a special highway rate was levied to 'employ the poor' on mending the roads. The standard response to the subsistence crisis was for the gentry and borough governments to set up subscriptions to

³¹ East and West Sussex Quarter Sessions Order Book, West Sussex Epiphany Sessions 1795, ESCRO, QO/EW 32; West Sussex Quarter Sessions roll, Epiphany Sessions 1795, WSCRO, QR/W 608, f.58; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 24 November 1794.

³² *London Gazette*, 17 January and 14 February; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 16 March 1795.

³³ Surrey Quarter Sessions, Easter 1795, SHC, QS 2/6; Diary entry of Stephen Rouse, butcher and grocer, Eastchurch, Isle of Sheppey, 24 January 1795, CKS, U2567/1795 f.24.

provide subsidised flour or bread to the poor, and throughout January and early February parish followed parish in so doing. A subscription set-up at Maidstone at Christmas 1794 had by 6 January already assisted 900 families, and was soon followed by virtually all the surrounding parishes, including the especially hard-hit hop parishes where the freezing conditions curtailed labouring in the fields in a period particularly important for the labouring poor due to traditionally heavy demand for piece workers in the preparation of hop poles.³⁴

The extension of both philanthropy and institutional relief came with many stipulations. The vestries and various sub-committees set-up to regulate the distribution of relief had to decide who was eligible to receive relief, thereby inevitably causing resentment. Artisans and skilled labourers who had never previously resorted to the vestry for relief were particularly at a disadvantage; they were usually not deemed to be 'poor' and consequently were not eligible. The first report in early January of subscriptions in Sussex detailed that the poor were to be provided with bread in proportion to earnings, predating by about four months the similar, and infamous, scheme instituted by the Berkshire magistrates at Speenhamland.³⁵ At Eastbourne the vestry agreed that subsidised flour be provided directly from two millers to certain poor people 'as may appear proper objects to this Vestry'. At Beckley, near Hastings, 'certain poor families' were to receive subsidised flour for 'ready money only', thus alienating those with no cash. At nearby Icklesham only the 'industrious labourers' were eligible to purchase flour at a shilling a gallon. In other parishes, especially those with workhouses, other expedients were resorted to. Contracts 'letting' the poor in workhouses to private individuals, thereby removing the day-to-day responsibility for maintaining the poor from the overseers and regularising the cost of relief, were increasingly popular in the early 1790's. However, the majority of such contracts were negotiated before the cost of provisions soared, thus necessitating either a renegotiation or an attempt to drive down costs. At Dymchurch several paupers in the workhouse complained that the food was not fit to eat, forcing the 'master' of the workhouse to resign from his contract. At Sandhurst in the Kentish Weald the master of the workhouse was allowed an extra £3-5-0 a month due to 'the present dearness of provisions'. The Yalding vestry even decided that the present poor house was not big enough and agreed to build a much larger new house, however, by early 1796 the vestry abandoned the plan in an attempt to join the newly formed Gilbert's Union centred around nearby Coxheath – prime hop territory. Clearly the extension of relief was in most cases

³⁴ Hernhill Vestry Minute, 30 January, CAN, U3/235/8/2; *Kentish Gazette*, 23 January 1795; *Maidstone Journal*, 30 December 1794, 6, 13 and 20 January 1795; D. Harvey, 'Aspects of Agricultural and Rural Change in Kent 1800-1900' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1960), pp.221-5.

³⁵ *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 12 January; *Reading Mercury*, 11 May 1795.

hardly voluntarily, but a necessary response that came with new stipulations and new attempts to instigate the giving of relief as a form of social control. Relief was more likely to be invasive and oppressive than benignly paternal.³⁶

It was no surprise therefore when Messrs. Webb and Fowle, a firm of Lamberhurst millers who were exporting corn out of the immediate district occasioning a 'great scarcity and a sudden rise in prices in that part of the county', were besieged between 3 and 5pm on 22 January by about 40 people who threatened that, unless the price of flour had fallen to one shilling per gallon by the following Monday, four or five thousand would pull down the mill and destroy all the corn and flour. The miller, after receiving advice from the magistrates, applied to the War Office for the assistance of some troops to protect his property; consequently a party of Warwickshire militia were dispatched. On the 27th a 'large party' of the poor inhabitants in the neighbourhood of nearby Wadhurst and Ticehurst again assembled at Lamberhurst. On arriving at the mill the protesters stated their unchanging demand to several gentlemen of the neighbourhood in attendance who acceded, the party therefore dispersed.³⁷ A similar assemblage of 'twenty or more people' at Edenbridge in Kent on 7 February not only demanded the price of wheat and flour be lowered but also that their wages should be raised. The four-hour tumult ended with six men, with between them 23 children, apprehended and later committed to the Assizes. All six men were found guilty of misdemeanour but fined only a shilling each.³⁸

Reports in early February of the Riot Act having being read at Hastings to quell a disturbance proved to be a fabrication, though a report in the *Sussex Weekly Advertiser* of the following week that a 'little MOB OF WOMEN' had attempted to assail a miller's cart laden with grist at nearby Sidley Green (in Bexhill parish), upon which the miller had got 'clear of his petticoat assailants', was substantiated. On 2 March Lord Sheffield apprehended a number of men involved in a furious *taxation populaire* incident at Worth, where the crowd only dispersed after a considerable struggle. The men were later examined before Sheffield and released with only a stern reprimand. In early June a farmers' barn at Worth was fired and totally destroyed.³⁹ However, by far the most common form of 'market intervention' was the theft of grain direct from farmers and millers. The *Sussex Weekly*

³⁶ Eastbourne Vestry Minute, 28 June, ESCRO DE/A1/3; Beckley Vestry Minute, 19 January, ESCRO PAR 237/12/2; Icklesham Vestry Minute, 23 January, ESCRO PAR 401/12/1; Dymchurch Vestry Minute, 18 April, CKS P125/8/1; Sandhurst Vestry Minute, 2 December, CKS P321/8/1; Yalding Vestry Minutes, 17 June 1795, 28 February and 6 March 1796, CKS P408/8/1.

³⁷ *Kentish Chronicle*, 6 February; Charles Jaques, Harrietsham, to the Duke of Portland, 23 January 1795, PRO HO 42/34, f.55. On 23 January flour, presumably 1st grade, was selling at Lamberhurst at 14d. per gallon.

³⁸ Indictment of Eatonbridge rioters, Kent Lent Assizes 1795, and calendar, PRO Assi 94/1399; *Kentish Gazette*, 20 February 1795.

Advertiser of the 23 March reported the theft of grain at Wick, North Ease, Ratton and at Heathfield where six bushels of oats were stolen from a granary, thereby suggesting that several persons must have been involved in carrying the booty. The gravity of the offence prompted the farmer to offer a £20 reward. Serious destitution, not surprisingly, was reflected in rising indictments for property crimes.⁴⁰ After the series of rural incidents the focus of popular disturbance shifted to the towns.

The newly swollen militia regiments were predominantly stationed in, or near, the coastal towns of the south-east. Despite Pitt's barrack-building programme, accommodation was inadequate with many militia privates billeted in dire lodgings, often unbearably cramped inns with hostile Innkeepers. Mr. Davidson, a New Romney innkeeper, induced to take action on account of the high price of provisions, complained to the War Office that 'we have been most oppressed with the army on this coast'. Davidson wished to know where he and others could apply for an increase in the allowance paid to those quartering soldiers. On top of bad living conditions the militia were more exposed to rapid price increases than their fellow townsmen, having no access to poor relief or subscriptions. When the Herefordshire Militia joined in a food riot at Chichester in April they complained that the country people were relieved by their parishes and by subscriptions, the soldiers needed bread, not bread money. The provincial press abounded with reports in 1795 of thefts by militiamen, and their frequent resort to violence in the face of public hostility.⁴¹

In late March 600 shipwrights at Chatham struck in complaint of the employment of house carpenters at, what the shipwrights considered to be, specialist work. Throughout the week the striking shipwrights held daily meetings, rather menacingly armed with bludgeons. On Saturday the 21st a number of the 'lower class of people' joined the shipwrights by assembling at the market. The party compelled the butchers to sell their meat at either 4d. or 4.5d. per pound; indeed one butcher selling foul meat had all his supplies forcibly taken by the people and burnt in the streets. Swelling the ranks of the food rioters were some privates of the West Middlesex Militia, who, according to the Chatham Bench, had been 'tampered' with. The Chatham Bench, fearful of a repeat riot on the next Saturday, complained to the War Office that the civil powers were inadequate and that, in light of the Militia's involvement, the bench also pleaded that they should be removed

³⁹ The report stated that the soldiers refused to fire on the rioters as 'the people were right'. *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 16 and 23 February, and 9 March 1795. See also R. Wells, *Wretched Faces*, pp.101 and 425. For the fire see, *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 8 June 1795.

⁴⁰ *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 23 March 1795; J.Beattie, *Crime and the Courts in England 1660-1800* (Oxford, 1986), pp.202-37.

⁴¹ Wells, 'The Militia Mutinies of 1795', pp.35-8; A. Davidson, New Romney, to Secretary at War, 6 July, and, Duke of Richmond, Goodwood, to Lord Windham, 13 April, PRO WO 1/1085 ff.301-2, 1/1092 ff.139-47. *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 16 March 1795.

before Saturday and replaced with 'fresh' troops. The West Middlesex regiment marched out of town to new quarters in Dartford and late on Friday the East Norfolk Militia marched into Rochester and Chatham to replace them. This combined with the extra peace officers especially sworn in helped to prevent any disturbance at the market on the 28th, although on the previous evening a quantity of beef 'little better than carrion' was taken from the market and burnt in the streets. Despite this the Chatham magistrates still feared that the Cavalry quartered in the town posed a potential threat and as such should be removed; what was needed was for troops to be ready to march to Chatham on any appearance of a disposition to riot. Troops were consequently sent from Canterbury to nearby Sittingbourne. However, by early April Sir Hugh Dalrymple, the Commanding Officer at Chatham, decided because of the 'very gentle and mitigated nature' of the riots the additional troops were no longer needed. The troops were sent back to Canterbury to allow the 22nd Dragoons, who were passing through Sittingbourne, accommodation in the town.⁴²

Meanwhile on 28 March the shambles at the Canterbury market were besieged by some privates of the South Hampshire Militia, who refused to pay more than 4d. a pound for the meat weighed out for them. The display of force left the butchers with little choice. Afterwards they went to the bakers shops and took a considerable number of quartern loaves for which they paid only 6d., whereas the Assize was set at 8½d. When news reached the Mayor of the fracas, he convened the Justices and quickly assembled the City Volunteers, upon which the privates returned to their barracks threatening more mischief that night.⁴³ At Chichester on the evening of 13 April in consequence of an inflammatory hand-bill which had been generally circulated through Chichester and the neighbouring villages, a considerable body of the lower orders of the city assisted by some 'country people' assembled in the city to force a reduction in the price of provisions. This already formidable gathering was further bolstered by a 'great number' of privates from the Herefordshire Militia. Intent on securing the release of some of their comrades, and three other persons, incarcerated for having taken several quartern loaves from the bakers for which they had only paid 6d., they proceeded to break the windows of the building where the magistrates were meeting, forcing the Mayor under fear of his own safety to capitulate. The 'mob' then went to a farmer in a neighbouring village, who, it was alleged, had been

⁴² North Division of Aylesford Magistrates, Chatham to the War Office, 25 March; Major General Dalrymple, Chatham, to the War Office, n.d. [late March], enclosing Clerk to Rochester Magistrates to Dalrymple, 29 March; Dalrymple, Chatham, to M. Lewis Esq., 6 April; PRO W[ar] O[ffice] 1/1084 ff.241-2, 1/1805 ff.151-4 and 175-7; *Kentish Gazette*, 24, 27 and 31 March; *Kentish Chronicle*, 27 March and 3 April; *Maidstone Journal*, 30 March 1795. After the riot on the 21st three companies of shipwrights sent from Chatham to Sheerness also struck work. Meanwhile the shipwrights at Chatham published an 'illiterate' hand bill outlining their grievances over carpenters. By early April the strike extended to the dock-yard at Deptford. *Kentish Chronicle*, 17 April 1795.

⁴³ *Kentish Gazette*, 31 March, and *Kentish Chronicle*, 31 March 1795.

withholding corn from the market. The farmer was compelled to promise that he would bring his corn to market and sell it at five shillings a bushel. The following evening at a meeting called by the Mayor a subscription raised nearly £300 to retail bread at 6d. per quartern loaf and meat at 4d. per pound to the 'soldiery and other necessitous persons'. The Duke of Richmond, informing the War Office of the Chichester events, stated that 'discontents' had already appeared at Petworth and that a disturbance was threatened at Arundel. Little did Richmond know but the 'greater part' of the soldiers quartered at Arundel had on that day peacefully assembled and addressed themselves to the Mayor, complaining that with the present price of provisions they could not subsist. The Mayor would not have informed the War Office if the men had not insisted that he must.⁴⁴

Three days later 200 women and girls peacefully assembled at the market in Brighton, with a loaf of bread and a steak hoisted on sticks, which they occasionally lowered to express their desire that the price of provisions should be lowered. On the same day a disturbance occurred at Petworth where the 'county people received countenance' from the privates of a militia regiment. Indeed, during that week a similar disturbance also occurred at Littlehampton.⁴⁵ However, the most dramatic intervention by a militia regiment started at Seaford on the 14th. The Oxford Militia marched rather menacingly with their bayonets fixed from their barracks at nearby Blatchington Down into the centre of Seaford, after meat bought earlier in the day proved foul. Upon their arrival, in a gesture of appeasement, a magistrate offered them free wheat, but they still went on to visit the butchers and grocers, seizing meat, cheese, butter and every other article they could get before putting the booty on sale in the churchyard, before descending upon the pubs, forcing publicans to lower beer prices. Lt. Col. Langton later prevailed upon many of the men to return to their barracks but the rest of the men proceeded to Newhaven, where flour was being exported from the Tide Mill. A sloop laden with flour moored in the creek was boarded and the cargo removed, most of which was warehoused, excluding a small amount put on sale to 'those who chose to purchase'. By the next day the 300 plus soldiers in Newhaven started to liberally indulge themselves by emptying the cellars of every public house. The siege continued to the following morning when, after a fierce battle, 200 people were put under formal arrest. The Duke of Richmond selected two privates to appear before a Regimental Court Martial, fourteen before a General Court Martial, with two others

⁴⁴ *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 20 April; *Maidstone Journal*, 21 April; Duke of Richmond, Goodwood, 13 April, enclosing Richard Murray, Chichester to Richmond, 13 April, G. Pecknell, Arundel, 14 April, to Rt. Hon. William Windham, PRO W.O. 1/1092 ff.139-47, 1082, f.87. On the same day several corn buyers from area met at Arundel pursuant to a requisition of the Mayor to consider the present high price of wheat. They agreed not to pay more than £14 per load for three months, with the merchants agreeing to cease buying altogether for one month. All these regulations were to be enforced by a penalty of £100. *The Times*, 23 April 1795.

joining two civilians to be tried at a Special Commission of Sussex Assize. The Court Martial sentenced three men to death, although one was reprieved with life transportation to Australia, with the Special Commission sentencing the two privates to death. All four were hanged on the 13 June at Horsham amidst a backdrop of a massive influx of troops into Sussex. The riots, trials and executions received intensely detailed nationwide press coverage, as did the new concessions in terms of bread and meat to the militias, personally orchestrated by Pitt in belief that May was the month most likely for mass and widespread disturbances.⁴⁶

However, before the trials further disturbances occurred. The 23 April saw a far more peaceable group of Militia soldiers accompanied by some townsfolk assemble at Guildford to express their desire that the price of provisions be lowered, and specifically that meat should be sold at 4d. per pound. However, on the appearance of the magistrates assembling the crowd dispersed and the soldiers were sent out of the town.⁴⁷ At the rural parishes of Horsmonden and Brenchley, near Tunbridge Wells, a group of labourers 'riotously' assembled on 4 May, for half an hour, outside the house of a retailer; six of the men were later committed to trial at the Kent Summer Assizes. Also on trial were five sailors, who had been committed on a charge of riot and assault on 13 May at Minster on the Isle of Sheppey. Their case is instructive, for whilst Professor Wells has labelled the incident they were involved in as a food riot, in reality it was a bar room brawl that led to a full-scale riot.⁴⁸

The period between late April and early June though marked a noticeable shift in the tactics of protest. The Mayor of Hastings wrote to Portland to inform him that seditious hand-bills had been posted up and several threatening letters sent to various undisclosed persons in Hastings and the surrounding neighbourhood. The peaceable 'behaviour' of the townspeople, 'even of the lower classes' convinced the Mayor that the letter writer was a 'stranger' sent to Hastings to incite disturbance. The man in question was often to be seen reading Paine's writings and 'other works of that description', had spoken disrespectfully of the King and Government, and had taken 'infinite pains' to mix with the soldiers, often

⁴⁵ *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 20 April; *Maidstone Journal*, 21 April; Duke of Richmond, Goodwood, to Rt. Hon. William Windham, 13 April 1795, PRO W.O. 1/1092 ff.139-47.

⁴⁶ This paragraph is loosely based on Wells, *Wretched Faces*, pp.282-3.

⁴⁷ *The Times*, 25 April, and, *Reading Mercury*, 27 April 1795.

⁴⁸ A local woman and a sailor had been drinking at the pub of Thomas Monday, when they 'accidentally' broke a window. Monday upon asking for payment for damages was subjected to a barrage of abuse, so he ejected the woman who proceeded to break all the pub windows she could. The landlord was so enraged that he knocked the woman to the ground and nearly bit off her thumb. The following evening about 50 of the ships crew went to Monday's house, where after severely beating him proceeded to destroy all the furniture and then started to demolish the house. When some a civil force and some townspeople assembled in attempt to oppose the sailors a bloody battle ensued in which two sailors were shot, and another badly wounded. *Maidstone Journal*, 12 and 25

giving them money for drinks. In mid June inflammatory bills, 'written tolerably well', were stuck up around Lewes and Chichester. One such bill picked-up at Lewes implored that the soldiers should

with intrepid Hand Grasp Sword and Gun to save thy native land for see your Comrades murder'd, ye with Resentment Swell and join the Rage, the Aristocrat to quell let undaunted Ardor each bold Bosom warm. To down with George and Pitt, and England call to Arms.

The editor of the *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, mindful of the violent and revolutionary tone of the handbill, wrote to Richmond to ask his opinion as to whether he should copy it in his newspaper.⁴⁹ Meanwhile on 29 April a farmers barn was fired at Carshalton, Surrey, and only eight days later a barn full of corn was set on fire and destroyed at Teynham in Kent.⁵⁰

Reports from East Sussex throughout June claimed that millers were exporting corn. Messrs. Catt and Boston at Newhaven, 'the very people [for whom] Government have been so lately fighting their cause', had a vessel laden with flour ready to embark for Liverpool. Farmers were also selling corn to Kentish millers. The situation by the end of June was so severe that many Sussex millers had shut their mills for want of flour, with others, as well as bakers, unable to supply even constant customers with supplies. Whilst there was enough corn left in Sussex to last till the harvest, the supplies were unevenly spread, a situation not helped by the decision by most parishes not to 'dispose' of any corn except to their own parishioners. Whilst the justices had prevailed upon dealers not to send any more corn out of the county, Justice Shelley even warned Mr. Barton, a Newhaven miller, that mischief would again ensue if exports continued, and Millers were told to make supplies available, specifically of brown bread, the cost to plebeian consumers would still be prohibitive. Lord Sheffield warned that whilst parishes such as his own (Fletching) and others had decided that any cost above eight shillings per bushel should be paid from the poor rates, he was 'very uneasy concerning other Parishes in the Weald where there is not a Gentleman resident'. Most agricultural labourers were not immune from supply and price pressures. Whilst some farmers adopted the truck system (selling grain directly to their labourers), thus easing some localised employer-employee tensions, the price of wheat for most labourers continued to rise until the harvest.⁵¹ This upward movement of the price of

May, 2 June; *Kentish Gazette*, 19 May and 28 July; Calendar of prisoners for trial, and sentences, Kent Summer Assizes 1795, PRO Assi 94/1400.

⁴⁹ Mayor of Hastings, 1 May, Richmond, Goodwood, 22 June, enclosing, Mr. Lee, editor of the *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, Lewes to Richmond, 15 June, PRO HO 42/34, ff.357-8 and 35 ff.29-31.

⁵⁰ *London Gazette*, 28 April; *Kentish Gazette*, 8 May 1795.

⁵¹ Messrs. Shelley and Green, Lewes, 20 June, Richmond, Whitehall, 22 June, Shelley, Lewes, 24 June, and enclosure, Lord Sheffield, Sheffield House, 28 June, to Portland, PRO HO 42/35, ff.18, 25, 47-9, and 50-2; *Kentish Gazette*, 9 and 26 June, 28 July 1795.

wheat was evidently the result of monopoly, claimed one writer to the editor of the *Maidstone Journal*. An exceptionally cold June, with frosts, even in the south-east, killing thousands of lambs, stopped the ears of wheat from 'fulling' out properly, fuelling fears for a late, and deficient, harvest, thus putting further upward pressures on the price of corn.⁵²

Millers in Sussex found they could import very little German wheat, and then of a very indifferent quality, efforts further frustrated by the continued coastal trade in grain from Newhaven. The situation in Kent was slightly different: whole cargoes of imported wheat were advertised for sale at Dover, where by June millers were totally dependent on supplies from Mark Lane (essentially the central national market), and Sheerness, but it was not enough to ease severe supply shortages in the neighbourhood of Faversham, where in early August, with only one week's supplies remaining, the Justices desperately pleaded with Portland to send 200 quarters of wheat to Milton-next-Sittingbourne. In Kent even into July reports abounded that millers were exporting corn. One Woolwich baker was even forced into making a public retraction of a statement he had made claiming that a Farningham miller had exported flour to France.⁵³ Privy Council recommendations that no finer bread should be consumed than the Standard Wheaten variety were sent out by the Duke of Portland to all clerks of sessions in mid July and were soon generally adopted throughout the south-east. Officers at the Brighton Camp agreed to only have brown bread on their tables, a policy backed up with the forfeiture of a month's pay for anyone breaking the agreement.⁵⁴ In tandem with these resolutions, a number of subscriptions were set up to provide subsidized standard wheaten bread or, in the case of Brighton, potatoes. In Canterbury the subscription provided the poor with standard wheaten loaves at 8d. whereas the Assize was set at 11d. Parish vestries also set-up schemes with similar provisions, indeed vestry-organised schemes that were paid for out of the poor rates were more general in July than in January. At Long Ditton, near Kingston-upon-Thames, poor families were to be asked whether they were 'inclined' to use rice, peas or potatoes instead of standard wheaten bread. No response is given, but in light of the numerous reports that, as soon as the Privy Council resolutions were adopted, agricultural labourers were voicing their dissatisfaction with having to eat brown bread, the uptake would have been less than enthusiastic. Indeed, one Sussex correspondent informed Portland that 'no substitute for

⁵² Wells, *Wretched Faces*, pp.36-7.

⁵³ Shelley, Lewes, 28 June, James Tappenden, Clerk to Upper Lathe of Scray Bench, Faversham, 6 August, to Portland, PRO HO 42/35, ff.57-8 and 359; *Kentish Gazette*, 9 June and 28 July; *Maidstone Journal*, 14 and 28 July 1795.

⁵⁴ *Kentish Chronicle*, 10 July; *Kentish Gazette*, 17 and 24 July; East Kent Quarter Sessions, Order Book Midsummer Sessions 1795, CKS, Q/S0/e10, f.105.

Wheaten Bread can be found with us as our labourers will not be satisfied without it'.⁵⁵ In late November labourers at Monkton in the Isle of Thanet struck from work in consequence of a proposal to mix a third barley meal in making their bread. When they met with their employers they demanded they be sold flour at a shilling a gallon, that they have beans for their hogs at three shillings a bushel, and that their wages be increased from 1/6 to 2/- a day. At Guildford resentment over allowances given to French emigrants, prompted a riotous attack on the claimants by the townspeople who were not similarly relieved. Despite the intervention of the magistracy it took the involvement of the military to restore order.⁵⁶

In general, though, new subscriptions, systematic parochial relief, and the as-ever labour intensive hay and corn harvests helped take some pressure off plebeian consumers. By early September when the first supplies of the new seasons corn reached the market the previous orders demanding that only bran be removed from flour were revoked.⁵⁷ However, the deficient harvest was not enough to prevent a spate of post-harvest incendiary fires. A not unusual malt house fire, at Woolwich, took on sinister overtones when the leather pipes of the attendant engine were maliciously cut. The whole premises were destroyed causing a massive £10,000 damage. A Lenham farmer was twice the victim of incendiaries, on the first occasion the elaborate trail set was discovered, however a fortnight later the arsonist successfully carried into effect the plan. The resulting fire destroyed 7,000 faggots; so intense was the blaze that the whole of Maidstone was thrown into 'great consternation'.⁵⁸

The need to get the new grain to market was recognised to be imperative. Orders allowing troops to assist in threshing allied to campaigns against forestalling, especially important considering that gardeners were busy buying up all the potatoes successfully forcing prices skywards, were populist measures designed to appease the still volatile urban markets.⁵⁹ The sole autumnal food riot occurred at Chichester where the market witnessed *taxation populaire* on 7 October, and threats of further action 'if necessary'. Chichester also played host to an increasingly political Friendly Society that had forged links with the infamous London Corresponding Society. Attempts by magistrates to suppress the society by threatening to withdraw the licence of a publican who played host to their meetings failed, the society simply moved the meetings to a radical tallow chandler's workshop. Radical factions elsewhere were also implicated in promoting disturbance. A group at Canterbury petitioned the Mayor against the Bill before Parliament 'for the more effectual preventing of seditious meetings', whilst at Chatham the class-conscious Bishop of

⁵⁵ *Kentish Gazette*, 17, 21, 24 and 31 July, and 14 August; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 20 July; *Kentish Chronicle*, 24 and 31 July, and 4 August. Long Ditton Vestry Minute, 16 July 1795, SHC 3833/5/2.

⁵⁶ *Kentish Chronicle*, 1 December; *The Times*, 3 August 1795.

⁵⁷ *Maidstone Journal*, 8 September; *Kentish Gazette*, 4 September; *The Times*, 8 September 1795.

⁵⁸ *Kentish Gazette*, 25 August and 25 September 1795.

Rochester was burnt in effigy by a crowd of a thousand people after proclaiming that 'the great mass of the people have nothing to do with the laws, but to obey them'.⁶⁰

At Hastings in December incendiary letters sent to local farmers, threatening not only the destruction of their property by fire but also harm to themselves, were acted upon in January when a large wheat stack of farmer Milward was fired. Davington, on the edge of Faversham, was also subjected to continual covert attacks in December and early January. Hedges were pulled down, fences broken, stock turned into the growing crops and dead wood broken out of hedges and stocks in the woods.⁶¹

After intense politicking, parliament repealed several legislative clauses covering the assize on mixed breads and coarse wheaten bread. This effectively signalled that Government desires, shared by both the Privy Council and the Select Committee, to legislate to prevent middle and upper class consumption of fine bread had been defeated by the opposing commercial interests. Despite this climb-down, copies of the new arrangements were sent out to all Quarter Sessions in time for the Epiphany Sessions in 1796 where they were readily adopted. Lord Sheffield, speaking at the East Sussex Epiphany Sessions, went further, stating his belief that parish should supply their poor with the means of subsistence by planting potatoes, cabbages and beans.⁶² These expedients, however, only exacerbated problems, fuelling class-driven disputes. The servants of an East Sussex farmer protested at his giving them barley bread. In an attempt to resolve the dispute, the farmer and his protesting labourers went before a sitting of the magistrates at Lewes, who ruled in favour of the farmer, as he also supplied his servants with good meat and broth as well as the obnoxious bread. Other problems with the new legislation were also apparent. By freeing mixed breads from Assize regulation and instead leaving it to the millers and bakers to decide what was deemed 'proper and reasonable' to put into the mix, parliament had essentially created a charter for adulteration.⁶³ Another policy innovation supported by the government, although not backed-up with legislation, was that all wastes should be enclosed and brought under cultivation to expand the arable acreage. The Kent Agricultural Society readily adopted this as policy, recommending the move to members as being 'of the highest public utility'.⁶⁴

In the spring of 1796 wheat and flour prices again rose rapidly. After strikes in March by Kentish papermakers as well as rope-makers at Chatham, and another incendiary

⁵⁹ *Kentish Gazette*, 3 and 20 November; *Kentish Chronicle*, 3 November 1795.

⁶⁰ *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 5 and 19 October; *Kentish Gazette*, 20 and 24 November 1795.

⁶¹ *Kentish Gazette*, 25 January and 15 February; *Kentish Chronicle*, 26 January; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 25 January 1796.

⁶² Wells, *Wretched Faces*, chapter 12; *Kentish Gazette*, 5 and 8 January; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 18 January 1796.

⁶³ Wells, *Wretched Faces*, pp.211-2; *Kentish Chronicle*, 12 January 1796.

⁶⁴ *Maidstone Journal*, 12 January; *Kentish Gazette*, 19 February 1796.

fire in Sussex, a wave of urban food related disturbances occurred in Sussex during April and May.⁶⁵ The first such disturbance occurred at Petworth where the effigy of a miller, who had apparently prevented the 'proper' reduction in the price of flour, was paraded through the streets before being whipped and burnt at the market. It took Lord Egremont's troop of Yeoman Cavalry to restore order. The following week the farmers and dealers in corn at Shoreham market were assailed with stones, and were 'otherwise extremely ill-treated' when the market closed. At Chichester in early May the militia were again called out to quell a disturbance 'with respect to the price of flour', and at Hastings where between 200-300 women and girls armed with bludgeons and brooms paraded the streets 'in a very riotous manner' demanding the price of bread be reduced. After breaking the windows of a baker, their demands were complied with, upon which those assembled dispersed. The last such disturbance occurred in mid June at Rye, where a number of women and boys assembled in a riotous manner to demand an abatement in the price of flour. The gathering met a miller in the street and after 'abusing' him, forcing him to seek refuge in a nearby bake-house, proceeded to break his windows before dispersing: the Magistrates, though, still took two boys into custody.⁶⁶

III: *The Second Grain Crisis, 1796-1801*

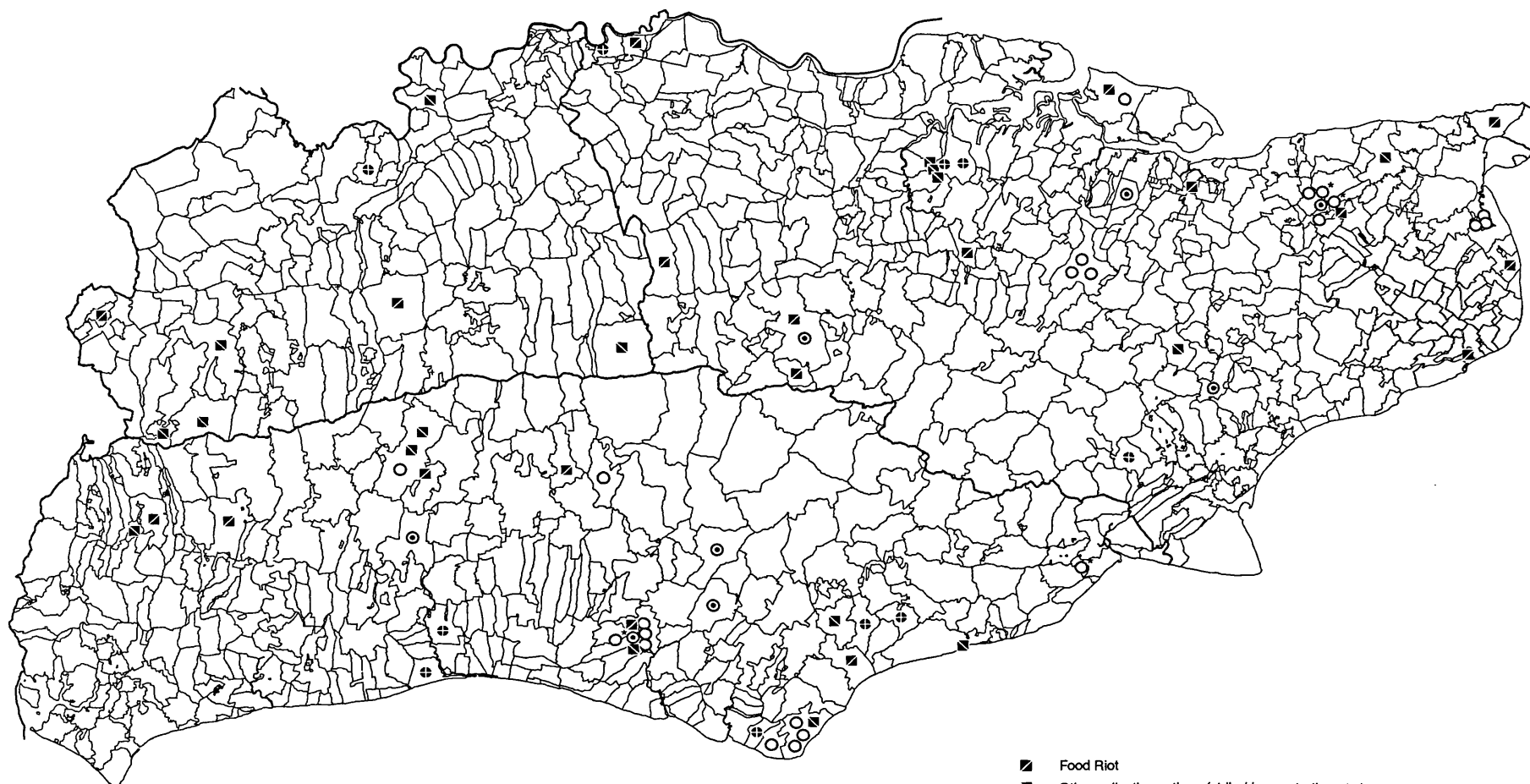
An abundant harvest in 1796 helped to ease both supply and price considerations, although the price of wheat between 1796 and 1799 never fell to pre-crisis levels. Parish vestries had little option but to maintain the relief levels realised during the first crisis. The post-harvest months of 1796 were, in comparison to the previous two years, exceptionally quiet. A single incendiary fire in a hop field just outside of Canterbury in early November was presumably an attempt to settle the scores in a post-harvest dispute.⁶⁷ The next few years saw an occasional resort to arson, animal maiming and the effecting of malicious damage, including the ransacking of seven churches, whose vestry rooms were particularly targeted, near Maidstone in February 1797. Sheep stealing was also a considerable problem and in

⁶⁵ *Kentish Gazette*, 18 March; *Times*, 24 and 25 March; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 7 March 1796. Of course that is not to say disturbances did not occur elsewhere that went, for whatever reason, unreported.

⁶⁶ *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 25 April, 9 and 16 May, 20 June. June also saw two more incendiary fires. At Seaford a surgeon's house was attempted to be set on fire by placing lighted matches and other combustibles into his cellar (in nearby Friston a month earlier a horse maliciously had its tongue cut out). Martha Vane was brought before the Malling Petty Sessions in Kent for allegedly setting fire to an outhouse. Whilst Vane was found guilty the witnesses believed her actions were due 'to the disordered state of her mind'. Vane was sentenced to be 'confined' during her 'derangement'. *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 30 May and 4 July; Malling Petty Sessions, 4 July 1796, CKS PS/Ma/4.

⁶⁷ *Kentish Gazette*, 8 November 1796.

Map 2.2: All Protests During the 2nd Grain Crisis: end November 1799 to March 1801



Plus, threatening letters sent to farmers in unspecified parishes in Sussex in early March 1800,
and again in late January 1801

- Food Riot
- ▣ Other collective actions (strike/demonstration etc.)
- ⊕ Arson
- Threatening letter/notice
- ⊙ Other covert protests
- ⊗ Food Riot combining strike/demonstration etc.
- * multiple cases (exact number unknown)

the vicinity of Ashford had reached epidemic proportions by late 1796, prompting the establishment of an association to prosecute sheep stealers, with the offer of a 50 guinea reward publicised in 1,000 handbills. It was radical political activity though that was perceived to pose the greatest threat to internal security. Throughout the spring and summer of 1797 the provincial press abounded with reports of seditious speeches and revolutionary handbills – an underground tactic deployed in face of Pitt's repressive 'Gagging Acts'. Troops at Maidstone, Chatham, Lewes and Chichester were all targeted. At Maidstone a well-known smuggler was charged with sticking up 'treasonable papers', but was later bailed by members of the London Corresponding Society.⁶⁸

Three weeks of continual wet weather in late August through to mid-September both delayed the harvest and prompted considerable pre-harvest price rises. Despite a universal 'harvest failure' there were no reported food riots or incendiary fires.⁶⁹ Again, the most sustained form of popular protest centred on south-eastern radical associations. A coach driver, en-route between Chatham and Gravesend was apprehended for carrying an Irish paper, called *The Press*, to a tavern in Rochester. Upon questioning, by the Privy Council, the pub was found to be the meeting place of a radical society, though the coachman denied all knowledge of the society having any connection to the editor of *The Press*. At Brighton a journeyman bookbinder was arrested and committed to the Lewes House of Correction, on the oath of two soldiers, for 'damning the King and other seditious expressions'.⁷⁰

It was not until the harvest of 1799 that agitation again reached fever pitch. The spring of 1799 was both dry and cold, with frosts in June and July further stagnating vegetation. In July the weather changed, the cold continued but it also started to rain unremittingly, and, despite occasional sun shine in September, the *Maidstone Journal* by the end of September reported almost universal harvest failure, stark words from a provincial press more normally to be found talking up prospects of plenty. The wet harvest meant that threshing was both exceptionally hard and inefficient work, the grain unwilling to separate from the straw, with coachmen reporting that the straw they received was full of grain: something *The Times* was at pains to state would only further exacerbate supply

⁶⁸ *Kentish Gazette*, 13 January, 24 February, 14 April, 23 and 26 May; *Maidstone Journal*, 23 and 30 May; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 12 June and 10 July 1797.

⁶⁹ *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 18 September; *Maidstone Journal*, 1 October. A Whitstable Waggoner was the victim in mid July of an exceptionally brutal case of animal maiming. His whole team of seven horses were poisoned, two dying the next day. The others were assisted by a vet and survived. *Kentish Gazette*, 18 July 1797.

⁷⁰ *Kentish Gazette*, 2 and 16 March, 3 and 17 April, 4 and 11 May; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 3 September 1798. For a unique account of popular politicking in the Medway towns see the detailed account of the London Corresponding Society's John Gale Jones, dispatched on official business to maintain links with the North Kent Corresponding Societies, with a useful recently written

problems.⁷¹ Late 1799 saw considerable resort to covert action. On 26 November a barn and a large wheat rick were fired at Lancing in Sussex causing £500 of damage, and within a fortnight the barns of an East Greenwich farmer were destroyed. Other forms of malicious damage were also increasingly deployed with the clergy particular targets.⁷²

The deadly triumvirate of covert protest, rising wheat prices, and the onset of winter were partially countered by a more immediate resort by parish vestries to subsidise plebeian flour than in the early winter of 1794, with the Winchelsea vestry acting as early as 24 October to allow the poor 'part of their gristing every week till the price gets lower'. Despite this initial zeal, the resort to public subscriptions throughout the winter and into the early spring of 1800 was exceptionally muted in comparison to 1794-5. Instead parishes throughout the south-east resorted to the poor rates to subsidize the subsistence of the labouring poor, most simply resorting to ad-hoc as-and-when-necessary payments, thus further politicising the role of overseers. Poor rates consequently reached unparalleled levels, far in excess of the previous peak in 1795-6.⁷³

The mass extension of poor relief inevitably provoked renewed efforts to minimise total expenditure, something made even more imperative by the failure of many of those rated to pay their assessments. Elsewhere workhouses were built, extended, or, as in the case at Biddenden and Yalding in Kent, turned into small-scale manufactories to employ the poor. The money raised by the parish farm set up during the previous crisis at Cranbrook, which was intended to be used to pay off the money initially borrowed to set up the farm, was redirected to the general relief of the poor until the next rate was due to be levied.⁷⁴ Another expedient adopted was the withdrawal of relief to non-parishioners resident within the parish, and, as was the case at Yalding, to insist that non-resident parishioners would only be relieved by a magistrate's order.⁷⁵ Calls were also again made to enclose wastes: a proposal at the Ewell vestry (Surrey) to enclose the wastes and common was unanimously agreed to, the same meeting immediately authorising a solicitor

introduction: P. MacDougall (ed.), *A Political Tour Through Rochester, Chatham, Maidstone, Gravesend, &c. by John Gale Jones* (Rochester, 1997, first published London, 1796).

⁷¹ Wells, *Wretched Faces*, pp.37-8; *Maidstone Journal*, 1 October 1799; *The Times*, 28 February 1800.

⁷² *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 26 November and 9 December; *London Gazette*, 31 December; *Maidstone Journal*, 8 and 29 October 1799.

⁷³ Winchelsea Vestry Minute, 24 October 1799, ESCRO PAR 511/12/1. Rye and Hastings were the only examples of public subscriptions, or at least those publicised: *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 6 January and 10 February 1800.

⁷⁴ Rye Vestry Minute, 14 April, ESCRO PAR 467/12/1/2; Charing Vestry Minute, 8 December 1799, CKS P78/8/5; Brookland Vestry Minute, 22 April, CKS P49/8/3; Winchelsea Vestry Minute, 4 May, ESCRO PAR 511/12/1; Yalding Vestry Minute, 13 August, CKS P408/8/2; Biddenden Vestry Minute, 10 August 1800, CKS P26/8/3; Cranbrook Vestry Minute, 6 January 1801, CKS P100/8/2.

⁷⁵ Yalding Vestry Minute, 1 November, CKS P408/8/2. At Aylesford a decision was taken to prohibit all non-parishioners from receiving medical aid; Aylesford Vestry Minute, 5 October, CKS P12/8/1.

to draw an enclosure bill. The more conscientious vestry at Weybridge rejected a similar motion on the basis that *all* inhabitants benefit from the use of wastes and common. In general the unprecedented resort to the parish brought unprecedented parochial control.⁷⁶

It should be no surprise therefore that the first case of arson in 1800 was predicated by a poor relief dispute. On 15 February Thomas Stephens issued threats to the Appledore Vestry before proceeding to set fire to four parish cottages. Stephens was summarily tried before a single justice, but in default of paying the £20 fine, a sum not even the wealthiest plebeian smuggler could afford, was committed to the House of Correction for one month. The overseers at Horsted Keynes in West Sussex had already been threatened, as had the farmers at Andover in Hampshire, that unless flour was sold to the poor within a fortnight at a shilling a gallon all the corn stacks in the parish would be consumed by fire.⁷⁷

The profusion of threatening letters, although almost solely confined to Sussex, characterised the popular response to the dearth in the spring of 1800 in comparison to the same period during the first grain crisis. The record probably woefully underreports the existence of such letters: when, in early March the Lewes press reported that incendiary letters were almost daily dropped in 'different parts', it neglected to mention who were the actual recipients. The analysis offered was strikingly clear: 'if you walk the Cuntery tis remarked that there is plenty of Corn' read a letter picked up at Lewes, '[it must be] ye rich gentleman farmers, tis you that uphold all this Dearth... they will have no mercy shode them...there is maney Dogs that live far before Poor men, & you will see them Dambed before you will raise their wagers... he may As well fight as to be starved'. A letter received by post by the Inspector of the Lewes Market, couched in very 'terrific' language, went further threatening 'speedy destruction' to all those keeping the price of grain high by an army of 11 to 18,000 'desperate men' with missile weapons ready to 'rise' with little notice. The author even requested the letter be read to the farmers when they were assembled for market at the Star Inn.⁷⁸

Farmers in the vicinity of Eastbourne were also the recipients of numerous threatening letters. One of the recipients, 'the Ruler of the Parish', was warned that, as previous warnings had been ignored, 'we shall begin first with something be Longings to you ... think your Self well off if your not Burnt in your bead and many more shall fare the same in this Dam'd place for hear is a great many of Us in this Club'. At nearby East Dean, farmer Cosham, a member of the Corps of Sussex Volunteer Guards, less than a week after

⁷⁶ Ewell Vestry Minute, 29 July 1800, SHC 3831/1/1; Weybridge Vestry Minute, 7 October 1799, SHC, 2384/3/4.

⁷⁷ *Kentish Gazette*, 21 February. One of the overseers at Horsted Keynes had an anonymous letter dropped near his door, *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 20 January and 3 February; *Hampshire Chronicle*, 27 January 1800.

having a wheat stack fired in neighbouring Friston, received a threatening letter 'more wicked and alarming than any other heretofore picked up or received'. Bearing the Brighton post-mark the letter was both well written and lucid, but above all political: 'it would have been a great pleasure to me + others to have seen you + Five Thousand more of your wretched Myrmidians [myrmidons⁷⁹] consumed in the Flames whilst you are making the most shameful encroachments on the Liberties + Rights of Man'. Such was the paranoia generated by the letter that a 'small detachment' of cavalry was dispatched to East Dean.⁸⁰ Elsewhere in Sussex a week after Cosham's fire lighted firebrands were (unsuccessfully) thrust into a wheat stack at Beeding whilst a bundle of wheat arranged around a firebrand was tied to the door of the parish church. In early May a further arson attack occurred in Sussex, this time at Wartling, where a stack of 5,800 faggots was destroyed.⁸¹

Despite the proliferation of threatening letters many labourers still resorted to open lobbying, and despite the suppression of the 1795 disturbances open demonstrations, but such actions were, in the spring of 1800, almost exclusively rural in origin. On 17 February 50 labourers 'gathered' at Petworth to complain to the Magistrates that their families were on the verge of starvation. Sir Godfrey Webster attended on the men, promising to send a summons to all their parish officers to attend at the next Bench day if they dispersed. Disturbances also occurred at Lewes and Dorking, which 'was repeatedly besieged by large groups of labourers' declaring that whilst bread was so expensive they would not work until their wages were augmented. Labourers at Westerham in Kent attempted to 'forcibly' raise the wages of 'servants in husbandry or to reduce the Price of Corn'; their attempt at *taxation populaire* landed one man in the Assize dock. At Ardingley a number of labourers went in a body to the Parish officers and informed them that unless their wages were increased they could not provide their families with bread and would therefore become a burden on the parish.⁸²

During the spring and early summer the price of wheat continued to steadily rise. At Chichester by the end of June prices peaked at a level 80% higher than at the beginning

⁷⁸ *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 10, 24 and 31 March; Shelley and Green, Lewes to Portland, 31 March 1800, enclosing the letter sent to the Inspector, PRO HO 42/49 ff.432-4.

⁷⁹ One of a race of people who were led against Troy by Achilles, thereby giving their name to henchmen or followers.

⁸⁰ *London Gazette*, 22 March; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 24 March, 7, 14 and 21 April, 5 May; Shadwell, Ringer, to Portland, enclosing the letter sent to Cosham, 17 April 1800, PRO 42/49 ff.315-8. A subscription was entered into to raise a reward to help capture the incendiary, Cosham contributing £50 of the £96 collected. Despite not being insured the Sun Fire Office awarded him £200 as farmers in the vicinity were clients.

⁸¹ *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 21 April and 12 May 1800. In the case of the Wartling fire a £50 reward was offered, but to no avail.

⁸² *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 24 February and 21 April; Wells, *Wretched Faces*, p.426; Wells, *The Moral Economy of the English Countryside*, p.230; Indictment of William Brookes, labourer, Kent Summer Assizes 1800, PRO Assi 94/1499.

of the year, a level sustained till the end of July.⁸³ Thefts of wheat reached epidemic levels in March but continued into the harvest, whilst malicious attacks on farmers' property seem to displace arson as the key form of rural protest, although during July a further two incendiary fires did occur, one targeting the Esher overseer's wheat stacks who, the following day, also received a letter threatening to set fire to his house too.⁸⁴ At Framfield in the Sussex Weald the bines of 1,300 hop plants were maliciously cut. The *Sussex Weekly Advertiser* even went as far as to proclaim 'a new specie of robbery' when the skids and chains were maliciously wrenched off a wagon at Mark Cross in early June. If the link between theft and protest was ever doubted, a series of attacks on property in the neighbourhood of Linstead (Kent) during April dispelled any doubts: iron work was taken from gates, ploughs, harrows and other farming utensils; hedges, fences, gates, posts and rails were broken down; trees, woods and shaws were cut down and 'otherwise destroyed'; turnips, potatoes, poultry, tame rabbits, and bees were stolen; and gardens and orchards were plundered.⁸⁵

The promise of an abundant harvest in early August was widely reported, despite the drought conditions in much of the south-east which forced an early start to the reaping. At Minster in the Isle of Sheppey most farmers had begun to cut their wheat by 4 August, and by the middle of the month the harvest in much of East Kent had finished, helping depress wheat prices, prompting the Mayor of Canterbury to lower the assize of bread.⁸⁶ However, weather conditions in late August seriously deteriorated; *hailstorms followed* persistent rains, thus not only stopping the harvest where it had commenced but also stopping immature grain from ripening properly. The impact on prices was both instant and hard felt, provoking immediate popular responses in Sussex, where, the Lewes press reported, the 'lower orders in many parts of the county have a riotous disposition on account of the high price of every necessary article of life', demanding that the Government take action.⁸⁷

Despite the fears of the Lewes press, it was Kent rather than Sussex where discontent was converted into action. The mass disturbances in London during mid-September threatened to physically spill out into Kent. Fears that the extensive mills at

⁸³ For Chichester wholesale wheat price returns see Wells, 'The Development of the English Rural Proletariat', pp.46-8.

⁸⁴ *Kentish Chronicle*, 25 July; Esher Vestry Minute, 4 August 1800, SHC 2383/9/2. Notice offering a 100 guinea reward was, apparently, placed in the *County Chronicle* newspaper. However, like the *Maidstone Journal*, it frustratingly does not survive for 1800. For an analysis of these problems see the section conclusion.

⁸⁵ *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 17, 24 and 31 March, 9 June; *Kentish Gazette*, 18 April 1800.

⁸⁶ *The Times*, 16 August; *Kentish Gazette*, 8 August. Diary entry of Stephen Rouse, butcher and grocer, Minster in Sheppey, 4 August, CKS U2567 F30. In the Medway towns a society to prosecute forestallers and regraters was established to help boost supplies: *Kentish Gazette*, 12 August 1800.

Bromley were to be attacked 'by the mob' prompted two regiments of the Tower Hamlets to be sent there, arriving in 'time enough to prevent any mischief'. However, it was on Sunday 14th that popular politicking commenced in earnest in Canterbury and Rochester. In Canterbury during the evening two threatening bills were posted up on the Monument calling a mass meeting on Monday at the Corn Market. The bills clearly demonstrated that it was radical populist groups behind attempts at mobilisation:

How long will ye quietly and cowardly suffer yourselves to be thus
imposed upon and half-starved by a set of mercenary slaves and
Government hirelings?
Can you still suffer them to proceed in their extensive monopolies and your
families are crying out for bread? No!
Let them not exist a day longer. We are the Sovereignty. Be them at the
corn market on Monday

'Symptoms of riot' manifested themselves at Rochester in consequence of a report that a numerous meeting would take place to consider the high price of provisions. As the evening drew near people started to assemble, eventually a crowd of between 300-400 people gathered, however the debate was not unanimous in deciding what course of action to take. The gathering agreed to meet again the following day, and then dispersed.

On Monday evening, as promised, the people reassembled at the Vines. Mr Kennedy, a magistrate, heard a 'low illiterate vulgar fellow' read from a pamphlet to about 200 'working people'. The speech was both 'very inflammatory and scandalous', tending to incite those gathered to 'improper acts'. The parallels with the Canterbury handbills are striking. The speaker decried what he saw as the 'passive obedience' of the populace, forcefully recommending that every resistance should be made against the 'present oppressors'. Unsurprisingly he name-checked the London Corresponding Society. The gathering then proceeded to the house of John Boghurst in the town centre. However, as Boghurst was away from home they dispersed. Fears were raised that they would meet again on the following evening, therefore handbills were speedily printed asking masters and mistresses to keep their charges indoors. A meeting of the inhabitants was also called to swear in special constables, should they be needed. Lord Romney wrote to Portland on the 19th expressing his concern that, despite the Rochester meetings having stopped for the present, 'the most desperate and abandoned Jacobins' were attempting to hold meetings in different parts of the county, but nothing of 'any consequence' had yet occurred.⁸⁸ Romney was obviously unaware that the people *had* met again on the previous evening, 2000 people assembled to petition the Mayor asking for redress, 'making use of very threatening

⁸⁷ *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 8 and 15 September 1800.

language'. This latest gathering prompted a further handbill from Mayor Thompson, warning that future gatherings would be countered by military force. Undeterred, another meeting occurred the following evening: this time Thompson's threats to read the Riot Act did manage to successfully disperse the crowd. Thompson, informed the Home Secretary of his success, stating, in a self-satisfied tone, that they were now likely to meet elsewhere.⁸⁹

Meanwhile Tunbridge Wells was the scene of a considerable riot. Several hundred people had assembled 'in a tumultuous manner' and proceeded to break the windows of the room in the Market House, where the farmers were transacting their business. Two people were apprehended, but one escaped. In precaution the Cavalry were drafted in on the following Friday to protect the market, however fewer farmers turned up and nothing ensued. The previous day had also seen attempts in Surrey to incite a disturbance at Kingston-upon-Thames.⁹⁰ During the end of the week several threatening papers were dropped in Canterbury and numerous shop shutters were graffitied with 'inflammatory words' leading to fears that the Saturday market would be disrupted. The Mayor and some constables, no doubt mindful of the attack the previous evening on an unpopular grocer's shop at nearby Faversham by a 'mob' of between 300-400 people, went to the Butter Market early on Saturday in order to prevent any assembly. However, an unusually large number of people were already present. Amongst their number was one man attempting to stir up discontent: the Mayor instantly seized him. Meanwhile the butter sellers had arrived and, upon asking 18d. per pound, were told by the people that they would pay no more than 14d. After a considerable altercation the sellers conceded, with some butter reduced to a shilling a pound by the end of the day. That afternoon a procession headed down the High Street lead by two 'gypsy' boys holding bulls' heads on poles: clearly butchers were as unpopular as the butter-sellers. In the evening an attempt was made to create a disturbance in the shambles but was placated by the butchers 'fairly' selling their beef and mutton at 6d. per pound. Fears that bread might also be subjected to *taxation populaire* were averted by a promise, publicised on Friday, from the farmers who were to bring 'a liberal supply' to market and that quartern loaves would be sold for a shilling.⁹¹

Saturday 20 September proved to be one of the most troubled days in the history of Kent. At 6:30pm a disturbance broke out at Woolwich on account of the popular belief that 'the high price of provisions rests with the different retailers', with popular opprobrium heaped most heavily on a cheesemonger. It took the assembled military till 4am to disperse

⁸⁸ *Kentish Gazette*, 19 September; J. Kennedy, Rochester, 15 September (9pm), and Lord Romney, The Mote, to Portland, 19 September 1800, PRO 42/51 ff.152-3 and ff.278-9.

⁸⁹ *Kentish Gazette*, 23 September; Mayor Thompson, Rochester, to Portland, 19 September 1800, PRO HO 42/51 ff.289-90.

⁹⁰ *Kentish Gazette*, 26 September; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 22 and 29 September 1800; Wells, *Wretched Faces*, p.131.

all the people. The same day a disturbance at Dover resulted in butter being sold at a lower price, the same occurring at Tonbridge. At Sheerness the 'common people of the Garrison, the Dock Yard and Blue Town' assembled as early as 6am in the market place to reduce the price of butter from 17d. to a shilling a pound. A magistrate promptly attended and 'convinced' those gathered that 'no one had a right' to set prices and that therefore no one would be allowed 'to take [such] a liberty'. The market place at Deal was also the scene of popularly executed *taxation populaire*. At Sandwich the deputy Mayor, in the Mayor's absence, was sent into a panic by 'inflammatory papers' stuck upon the Toll Bridge storehouse on Friday and Saturday, the second paper urging 'all the poor men of Sandwich' to meet that evening 'to have things... as they have begun at Canterbury'.⁹²

The following week was comparatively quiet. Fears at Brighton that an 'alarming tendency to Riot' would erupt into *actual* action went unsubstantiated. At Rochester farmers were essentially forced into agreeing to send corn to market every week for the next three weeks, corn was to be rationed to a maximum of two bushels per family to be ground gratis by 'most' millers. On Monday the Mayor of Maidstone convened a meeting of farmers and gentlemen to consider how to lower the price of provisions so as to avert a riot in Kent's most strongly popular political and trade unionist town. The meeting resolved that a letter should be sent to the High Sheriff asking him to enforce a ruling to compel all farmers to thrash out their grain and bring it to market. Later that evening a 'very large body of people' assembled in the market place at Margate to attempt a reduction in the price of bread. The people were carrying an effigy, which they intended to burn, of a miller who, it had been reported, was about to take delivery of some damaged foreign wheat. However, before the people had achieved their goal, the constables arrived and seized two men, thereby outraging the crowd, and, as one of those seized was an innocent volunteer, the Volunteers. Captain Cobb of the Volunteers freed all those seized, thereby effectively sanctioning the actions of the crowd. On this they proceeded to the objectionable mill and broke all the windows they could, as well as committing other non-specified 'acts of violence', only the intervention of the Volunteers prevented the mill's total destruction.⁹³ Later that week their Thanet cousins at Ramsgate set up an emergency subscription to convict and punish forestalling and regrating in the market and town. They also agreed not

⁹¹ *Kentish Gazette*, 23 and 26 September; *Kentish Chronicle*, 23 September 1800.

⁹² *Kentish Gazette*, 23 September; *Kentish Chronicle*, 26 September; A. Graham, Sheerness, to J. King (Home Office), and Slaughter, Sandwich, to Portland, 20 and 23 September 1800, PRO 42/51, ff.306-7 and 418-20.

⁹³ Earl of Pembroke, Brighton, and Mayor Thompson, Rochester, to Portland, 22 and 23 September, PRO HO 42/51 ff.345-6 and 402-3; *Kentish Gazette* and *Kentish Chronicle*, both 26 September 1800.

to pay more than 14d per pound for fresh butter and swore in extra constables to deter any disturbance.⁹⁴

Attention then shifted to the area between Midhurst and Godalming. On Monday 22nd, 150 paper-makers 'from the country' descended upon Midhurst, forcing the town crier to read out a proclamation and ordering a printer to print it, stating they were to come back on Thursday to check their intentions had been carried into effect. Warrants were issued for two workers of the Spring Mill, three miles from Midhurst, and on Wednesday both men were without resistance committed to the Petworth House of Correction. It transpired that one of the men had gone to Godalming where a 'large mob' had assembled and issued the same proclamation. Apparently the Godalming magistrates had no objection to the proclamation and agreed to meet in a week to consider how to reduce the price of provisions. On his returning to the paper mill, the paper makers decided to declare a 'Holy Day' and attempted to gain the same concessions from the Midhurst magistrates. Despite 'vague reports' that the Godalming men planned to rescue the prisoners, Richmond planned to try the men at West Sussex Quarter Sessions, believing that it 'might do to make an example' of them. The Godalming men also appeared at their respective Quarter Sessions, where, despite bills being found against the men, they were discharged in the belief that leniency was 'the best way to bury the affair'.⁹⁵ At nearby Farnham the previous market day had exhibited symptoms of riot and threats were made that the 'country people' were to gather at the market on the 25th. As promised they appeared, armed with large bludgeons, but the magistrates were prepared and, with the assistance of a small military force, went amongst the crowd removing their weapons and persuading them to disperse; only then was the grain sold at lower prices. The *Hampshire Chronicle* moralised that the price would fall further when the farmers felt it safe to bring their grain to market. This bout of Surrey and West Sussex activism helped to inspire a further incident of *taxation populaire* in the small village of Easebourne, just outside of Midhurst.⁹⁶

In early October repeated attempts at Canterbury to incite riots by sticking 'violently inflammatory' handbills up proved unsuccessful. The earlier resolutions compelling neighbouring farmers to bring grain to market, and selling quartern loaves for a shilling, were reinforced by the decision of the proprietor of Abbots Mill to sell flour at 72s. to the City authorities and to sell meal directly to the 'industrious poor' at 18d a gallon. Maidstone, however, did witness a food disturbance, its first in 1800, when a crowd that had gathered outside a building where the farmers were transacting their business hooted and hissed at the farmers on their exit. The Mayor and magistrates warned them that the

⁹⁴ *The Times*, 27 September 1800.

⁹⁵ Duke of Richmond, Midhurst, to Portland, and William Mitford, Pinhill, Surrey, to the Home Office, 25 September and 8 October 1800, PRO HO 42/51 ff.455-7 and 42/52 ff.32-5.

Riot Act would be read unless they dispersed: this was ignored. Instead the crowd proceeded to the house of Mr. Burgess and after 'abusing him in a shameful manner' broke all his windows. The Mayor held true to his word and read the Riot Act and also apprehended several of the supposed ringleaders.⁹⁷ Throughout October attempts were made at Lewes to incite disturbance with inflammatory notices, about the high price of goods, written on 'almost every brick and board surface'.⁹⁸

Wheat prices receded significantly in late September but rose steadily again from late October, provoking little discernible protest. A distinct resort to grain theft and, more particularly, sheep stealing, was most noticeable in the Sussex Weald but was by no means confined there.⁹⁹ Commissioner Corrin, or as the *Kentish Gazette* incorrectly called him, Commissioner Coffin, received a letter threatening that if he didn't leave the town he would be killed, the instruments of his demise already prepared.¹⁰⁰ In late November a Rye farmer who had dutifully brought his new corn to market from early September without asking for a specific price received a threatening letter inspired by Proverbs, Chapter 11:

he that withholdeth Corn
the people shall Curse him
But blessing shall be upon
the head of him that selleth it

Therefore if you value your
Life sell it or give it to
them that stand in need of it.

Further incendiary fires at Rochester and Ninfield and a brutal attack on two horses at Tunbridge Wells helped maintain the pressure on the local authorities to alleviate plebeian distress.¹⁰¹ However, the result was an enthusiastic uptake of the new Relief [Enabling] Act, passed by Parliament on 22 December. The Act, although watered down compared to the bill originally proposed, allowed local magistrates, after consultation, to force overseers in their petty sessional jurisdiction to pay up to one third of all relief in cereal substitutes, namely rice or potatoes.¹⁰²

⁹⁶ *Hampshire Chronicle*, 29 September 1800; Wells, *Wretched Faces*, p.131.

⁹⁷ *Kentish Gazette*, 3, 7 and 10 October; *Kentish Chronicle*, 10 October 1800.

⁹⁸ *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 20 October; *Kentish Gazette*, 7 November 1800 and 16 January 1801.

⁹⁹ *The Times*, 4 November. For the theft of grain see: *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 3 November, 8 and 15 December. For the theft of sheep see: *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 28 October, 20 November, 1 and 29 December.

¹⁰⁰ A Graham, Sheerness, to John King, 28 November, PRO HO 42/53, ff.454-5; *Kentish Gazette*, 16 December 1800.

¹⁰¹ John Boghurst junior, Rochester, to Portland, 16 December, PRO HO 42/55, ff.96-8; *London Gazette*, 16 December; *Kentish Gazette*, 28 November 1800; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 5 January 1801.

¹⁰² J. Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics in England and Wales 1790-1810* (1983), pp. 194-5.

By forcing a rural poor already in a state of near or actual starvation, and hitherto sustained on a diet comprised almost solely of wheat, into revolutionary dietary changes, Pitt's government had inadvertently removed much of the fear generated by the suppression of the 1795 disturbances. The new provisions and powers were an act of class betrayal by those who during times of distress were supposed to offer paternal aid, justification enough to many, not least radicals, to engage in class warfare. The Maidstone author of a threatening letter sent to Lenham in early January neatly summed up the situation:

we will fight and die for we have several [suffered?] all-most long anof and as for the K [King] and Mr. Pt and palament they are all RO-a-like and thay will find it out wen it is to late God is of our sids you may se by the faverabel weather if God was as much a gainst the poor as the rich are we shall have been all starvd before now long agoe. But we are all in good spearets for we hav got 900 of pick stars and 100 Blodgins¹⁰³

If an unprecedented resort to poor relief had helped to keep much of the countryside quiet (that is to say free from mobilised action) during the September uprisings, gentry attempts to restrict their Elizabethan 'rights' were bound to provoke a powerful resistance. William Scott, the labouring leader of an attempted insurrection centred on the villages south of Ashford, also rationalised the blame for the suffering of the labouring poor squarely at the doors of His Majesty's Government. Scott, and his other 'Trojans', had been actively canvassing support in the parishes adjacent to his native Wye since 1 December, using the tactic of discussing the 'dearth of provisions' since 'it was very bad on poor people who had large families'. Invariably the opinion expressed coincided with Scott's: the accord established, Scott then asked the person if they would sign an engagement 'to meet together in a Mob and to stand by each other in a conspiracy against the Government of this Country' and to effect a reduction in the price of grain. Scott was not apprehended until 1 January, and then only on the basis of a deposition taken the day before: presumably his politicking had become more intense since the rapid implementation of the new Act. Robert Mascall, an Ashford magistrate, wrote to ask Portland's advice on how to 'proceed' in the prosecution of Scott at the forthcoming East Kent Quarter Sessions in light that the idea of raising a mob 'was very general in this part of Kent' and that 'numerous agents were employed to take down the names of the labourers in different parishes'.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Wells, *Wretched Faces*, p.222-3; Mr. Lloyd, Lenham, to Portland, 2 January 1801, PRO HO 42/61, ff.5-6. Maidstone as soon as parliament passed the new act entered into a subscription in line with its provisions: *Kentish Gazette*, 26 December 1800.

¹⁰⁴ Rev. Breton and Robert Mascall, Ashford, 1 January 1801, enclosing depositions of William Browning, Wye, no occupation stated, 31 December 1800, James Allard, Wye, labourer, 1 January, and, Thomas Pellett, Kennington, shoemaker, 1 January; and, Robert Mascall, Ashford, 5 January, to Portland, enclosing deposition of John Arthur, Willesborough, labourer, 5 January, PRO HO 42/49, ff.454-7 and 42/61, ff.22-4; *Kentish Gazette*, 6 January 1801.

The provisions of the Relief Act had meanwhile been considered inadequate by a Common's Committee report; unless all people were *compelled* to consume brown bread the supply would not last. The result of these recommendations was the rushed Brown Bread Act that came into operation on 1 February. If the earlier Parochial Relief Act had already generated many 'treasonable papers' throughout the Sussex countryside, implementation of the new Act generated overt opposition linking both market towns and villages. The record, though, is clearly incomplete, as no reports appear in the Kentish provincial press in February of localised disturbance, yet, when Thomas Turton of Lingfield in Surrey wrote to the Home Office on 7 February to notify Portland of disturbances there, he alluded to a similar state of affairs in Kent.¹⁰⁵ Whilst it is therefore not strictly possible to 'reconstruct' any accurate lineage of events, it seems that most recorded events occurred in the fortnight between 5 and 19 of February. In Sussex, assemblages intended to intimidate the local authorities at Eastbourne, Horsham and Hastings appeared to have composed *solely of townspeople*, whereas at Lewes it was country people who assembled to force the magistrates into various concessions. 300 labourers from the villages of Chiddingly, East Hoathly, Framfield and Buxted had set out on the morning of the 14th with various intentions, the Buxted contingent intended to lower the price of provisions, whereas the Framfield men came armed with large sticks and the threat of strike action 'if they didn't live better'. Their action followed attempts by a group of Barcombe men earlier in the month to force down the price of *their flour*, also by marching upon Lewes. A week later the labourers in the neighbourhood of Horsham assembled with sticks, threatening a mass invasion of Horsham in three days' time unless their situation improved. Indeed, Horsham proved to be in a state of constant fear of such an invasion until well into mid March. A similar gathering occurred at Pevensey where the labourers intended to march to Hailsham to pull down the mill of an unpopular miller, but somehow they were 'dissuaded'. The Rye farmer who had received a threatening letter in November was again targeted, this time by a biblically inspired town-country coalition eerily foretelling the so-called Battle of Bossenden Wood in 1838:

we have agreed in 5 parishes we mean to have provisions cheaper or
Rescue our lives Sir we have no ill against you only your being Captaing
over these men that are kept under arms to keep people in Rougery and
Slavery all the Days of our Lives we are Led up by popery and oprestion
the same as France was before the war begun... you are agoing to have a
fast to offer up prayer to God but it is an offer to the Devil God will never
hear the prayer of the unmerciful the time is short that we must give an
account of our work

¹⁰⁵ Wells, *Wretched Faces*, pp.223-4; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 26 January; Thomas Turton, Sharborough Castle, Lingfield, to Portland, 7 February 1801, PRO HO 42/61, ff.118-20.

Events at Boreham and St. Leonards Forest, near Horsham, rested upon more traditional forms of community justice. At the former, men, women and children paraded the effigy of a miller, before hanging, burning and drowning him. To emphasis their point, on the way home they also broke several windows. The St. Leonards Forest disturbance comprised solely of irate women who cut to pieces the cloth a miller was using to dress the hated brown flour, before threatening to so treat the rest of his equipment if necessary.¹⁰⁶

Events in Surrey were said to have been directly inspired by events in adjacent Sussex parishes, but nevertheless took an apparently different course. In the neighbourhood of Lingfield, plebeian campaigning had generated a 200 strong list of those who had agreed to refuse accepting any wheat substitutes, each subscribing a penny to defray the lost earnings of those recruiting new 'members', 60 whom assembled at Lingfield poorhouse on 6 February to complain of the difficulty they were having using the rice and of the poor quality of the brown bread. The attendant magistrate told them how to cook rice but had to concur with them that the bread was below the standards permitted by the new Act. The 'spirit of disorder' apparent at Haslemere was echoed at Chiddingfold. An assembly of parishioners intimidated the parish officers into allowing them money in lieu of rice, indeed an increase in this monetary allowance was extorted under further threats. The crowd, on dispersing, threatened to meet again on the following Sunday or Monday, a threat backed up with hand-bills put up over the next few days 'fixing' the prices of several 'necessities of life'.¹⁰⁷

Despite the non-reportage of earlier events in Kent, a labourers' strike at Chislet in early March did receive some coverage when one labourer was apprehended on the multiple charge of unlawful combination and assault on the overseer.¹⁰⁸ Several further cases of animal maiming occurred in the late spring and further threatening letters were sent to overseers and farmers respectively at Southover, on the edge of Lewes, and Canterbury.¹⁰⁹ In early April the *Sussex Weekly Advertiser* alerted its readers to a systematic campaign of sheep stealing at Langton and Groombridge. 30 to 40 sheep had been stolen since Christmas, not unusual in itself, but all had been stolen in relation to the size of the

¹⁰⁶ *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 9 and 16 February; Richmond, Goodwood, 16 February, enclosing H. Shadwell, Ringmer to Richmond, 15 February, Midleton, Peper Harrow, 19 February, T. Lamb, Rye, 14 February 1801, to Portland, PRO HO 42/61, ff.156-8, 160-1 and 141-5.

¹⁰⁷ Midleton, Peper Harrow, to Portland, 19 and 20 February 1801, PRO HO 42/61, ff.160-1 and 162-3.

¹⁰⁸ *Kentish Chronicle*, 10 March 1801.

¹⁰⁹ Animal maiming: Lewes (heifer), early March; Amberley, Sussex (bullock), 14 June; and, Doddington, Kent (two horses), 23 April: *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 9 March and 22 June; *Kentish Gazette*, 28 April. Threatening letters: Mr Verrall, Southover, 15 March; and, Samuel Balderston, Westgate Court, Canterbury, 18 March: *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 16 March; Samuel Balderston, to Portland, 19 March 1801, PRO HO 42/61, ff.247-8.

farmers' flocks: such organised theft portrayed both a strong sense of class-consciousness and protest.¹¹⁰ Despite these covert activities, the Chislet strike effectively marked the end to the second grain crisis in the south-east. The harvest of 1801 proved particularly abundant, therefore although the sharp decline in the price of wheat in May was partly countered by increases in June and July (partly a function of farmers refusing to thrash the previous harvest's corn in an attempt to keep prices high) market prices had already taken into account the prospect of a plentiful harvest. Further incendiary fires in the autumn and early winter all acted upon specific personal grievances. Several hop warehouses were set on fire at Farnham by labourers incensed after an unresolved dispute as to piece rates in the hop fields. Their demands were trifling compared to the estimated £4,000 of damage. At nearby Frimley in early November a maid-servant was committed to trial after setting on fire her employer's farm-yard in early November. A travelling woman was suspected of setting on fire a cottage at Stanford in south-east Kent. Despite the weakest of circumstantial evidence, the Phoenix insurance office offered a five guinea reward for her capture. A fire in a Chatham house offered a more tantalising prospect, a bottle of combustibles had been placed through the cellar window but was soon discovered and extinguished without causing much damage. The house was on the edge of the market place, the scene of much earlier discord.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 6 April 1801.

¹¹¹ Wells, 'The Development of the English Rural Proletariat', p.48; *The Times*, 6 August, 1 October and 10 November; *Maidstone Journal*, 22 December 1801.

Chapter 7: The End of Overt Protest?, 1802-1828

I: 'Mr Air Gun without a noise'¹: The Burdens of a Numerous Poor, 1802-1810

The heavy rains of late December 1801 must have seemed ominous, a sense heightened when Lewes flooded on Christmas Day.² However, 1802 would prove remarkable for its comparative quietude. Integral to the creation of this impression of unassailability was the foundation of the Kent County Fire Office, established by the 'Gentlemen of Kent'. The Gentlemen were, with few exceptions, landowners or large farmers: presumably the public nature of much incendiarism, even if the actual level had declined in Kent during the second grain crisis in comparison to the first, was an important factor in the need for an insurance service that was accountable to local needs. Their investment in promoting quiescence was reinforced with the announcement that Pitt was to take a 530-acre farm at Walmer, a gesture that was interpreted as a huge endorsement of the Kentish agrarian economy, but also considering it's cliff top views of France as a unabashedly defiant and patriotic gesture.³

Central to this desire to promote a new sense of inclusiveness was the need to reinvigorate paternalism and restore the rural poor's confidence in the poor relief system. Demographic pressures heaped further pressure on an already inadequate rural housing stock, inevitably leading to higher rents, which, in many parishes, were either subsidised or wholly paid out of the poor rates. Spiralling rent subsidies allied to general higher relief costs lead to a further wave of poorhouse construction and Gilbert's Union formation. The decision of the Aldington vestry to attempt to join the already operational Waltham Union was typical, and came against a back-drop of a systematic campaign to appeal against all removal orders found against the parish. When nearby Smeeth were admitted into the Waltham Union they attempted to use the capital freed up by the sale of the parish poor house to erect parish houses on the waste, to accommodate the non-incarcerated poor; the Lord of the Manor refused though. Their fellow vestrymen at Battle were more successful in their attempts to regulate the housing of the poor. After resolving not to pay any rents higher than four guineas per year, the parish spent the next six years systematically buying up and erecting cottages on

¹ Quote from: *Kentish Gazette*, 17 April 1810.

² *The Times*, 30 December 1801; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 15 February 1802.

³ *The Times*, 15 April. The meeting that established the office was held at the Bull Inn, Maidstone, on 15 February, with a meeting four days later ruling that a capital to the extent of £100,000 needed to be raised, something that initially proved problematic. Kent County Fire Office Directors Minutes, 15 and 19 February, and, 12 April 1802, CKS U2593 B6/1.

the waste.⁴ Moves were also made to establish further manufactories in parish poorhouses, or to set the inmates to fieldwork. It should not have been a great surprise then to the Cranley vestry when in October 1807 their parish 'House of Industry' was set on fire. A labourer admitted his guilt to the Assize jury and was subsequently sentenced to death.⁵

Wells' claim that 'the successful mediation of the Bench between capital and labour in the form of systemised relief schemes' was instrumental in lessening tensions in the countryside between 1802 and 1809 needs some revision.⁶ Complaints by inmates over workhouse conditions were rarely resolved in their favour. When an inmate of the Coulsdon poor house complained to a local magistrate that the house was badly managed, the magistrate made an announced visit, upon which, unsurprisingly, all was found to be satisfactory.⁷ Certainly the precedent set by successful attempts at lobbying the Bench in 1800-1 made such a tactic a recognised mode of protest amongst the rural poor. The Malling Bench set out what they considered to be necessary incomes for different categories of the rural poor, however vestries were under no compulsion to make sure their poor were so renumeralated. It would require a complaint by a parishioner to the magistrates before a vestry were actually so compelled, something well understood by the Yalding vestry when they ruled that no person resident outside of the parish was to be relieved without the order of a magistrate. Often the overlap in personnel between the Vestry and the Bench helped to seal the fate of the parish poor. The grievances of the Battle poor over the conduct of the master of the workhouse were not made before the local Bench, which being located at Battle itself could not be more convenient, but at the actual vestry. Whilst it was evidently in the interests of farmer-dominated vestries to keep wages low and the poor rates slightly higher, it was even more advantageous to keep wages low and poor rates low, therefore encouraging transitory labour allied to a strong resort to the laws of settlement to keep the number of parish dependants to a minimum. Attempts to use rising rate costs as mitigating circumstances against rent increases obviously had very little impact, rents on the Earl of Darnley's estate in Kent had to endure rent increases between 1802 and 1809 of up to 70%. The desire to reduce the burden of the rates would invariably win out over and above the demands of the rural poor, committees set up to manage the poor were effectively precursors

⁴ Aldington Vestry Minute, 11 June, CKS P4/8/1; Smeeth Vestry Minute, 12 May 1805, CKS P4B/8/1; Battle Vestry Minutes, 15 March 1802, 11 April and 8 May 1803, 17 April 1806, 14 July 1807 and 23 November 1809, ESCRO PAR 236/12/1/2. Many of the houses erected at parish expense were located on wastes, for instance at Framfield in Sussex an acre of the waste was cleared to erect a terrace of three cottages; Framfield Vestry Minute, 28 July 1808, ESCRO PAR 343/12/1

⁵ Northiam Vestry Minute, 4 April 1803, ESCRO PAR 431/12/1; Midhurst Vestry Minute, 18 April 1806, WSCRO PAR 138/12/1. Cranley fire: Indictment of Edward Longhurst, Surrey Lent Assizes 1808, PRO Assi 94/1616.

⁶ Wells, 'Social Protest', p.158.

⁷ Coulsdon Vestry Minute, 23 February 1805, SHC 6672/2/1.

to the hated select vestries whilst the appointment of full-time overseers pre-empted the equally loathed assistant overseers.⁸

The level of incendiarism between 1802 and 1809, whilst declining in comparison to the crisis years of 1795-6 and 1800-1, was more intense than for the period 1790-4 and, significantly, the incendiary fires were also more likely to be against agricultural or poor law targets.⁹ The extent of other forms of covert protests in this period though was neither as intense as during the 1790's nor as significant in the choice of targets. 1810 did, however, mark a definite resurgence, with animal maiming, plant maiming and other forms of malicious damage all resorted to in various and unrelated cases - a clear mark of deepening social tensions. Similarly there was little resort to the sending of threatening letters before 1810, though in 1803 the Commissioner of the Lindfield turnpike received the ultimatum that unless he removed the Lindfield turnpike gate before 29 September he would be killed; the only explicit evidence we have of the depth of hostility to turnpikes in the south-east.¹⁰

The almost total absence of - recorded - overt acts of protest in the countryside is startling. Despite several strikes amongst journeymen in the south-east - tailors struck at Brighton in June 1805 and at Sheerness in June 1807, as did shoemakers at Brighton in July 1808 - the countryside *appears* to have been largely free from activism despite an already apparent furtive agricultural unionism. The nationwide papermakers' strike in the winter of 1803-4 started in the cluster of highly capitalised paper mills in the Maidstone district with a dispute between paper manufacturers and journeymen papermakers. These rural mills were left partly dormant, some running on skeletal of staffs of apprentices and agricultural labourers. The impact on these paper villages whilst short-lived was dramatic.¹¹

Assaults, although subject to an increasing amount of historical scholarship, have received little attention from scholars of protest.¹² Such attacks when committed in the context of a 'mobbing' are explicitly overt, but excluding food rioting, some forms of

⁸ Malling Petty Session Minute, 3 August 1795, CKS PS/Ma/4; Yalding Vestry Minute, 1 November 1800, CKS P408 8/2; Battle Vestry Minute, 20 November 1802, ESCRO PAR 236/12/1/2; Armstrong, *Farmworkers*, p.47. I have found only one example in this period of a rural vestry attempting to set wages, see Horsmonden Vestry Minute, 31 October 1802, CKS P192/2. Even vestries where a member of the clergy was a dominant figure were likely to pursue this course as tithes were increasingly seen as rateable.

⁹ In the period 1802-9 I have recorded 27 cases of arson of which 20 were against agricultural or poor law targets, whereas in the period 1790-4, excluding December, there were 14 and 7 respectively. Therefore between 1802-9 there were 3.38 cases per year with 74% against agricultural or poor law targets, compared to 2.8 cases per year at 50%. See Appendices 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3.

¹⁰ *Kentish Gazette*, 10 May. See also tables. Threatening letters: *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 11 September 1803 and 28 May 1810; *Kentish Gazette*, 17 April 1810.

¹¹ *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 13 February 1804, 10 June 1805, and 11 July 1808; *Kentish Gazette*, 2 June 1807. See also J. Rule, *The Labouring Classes in Early Industrial England* (London, 1986).

customary action, and later Swing, such overt attacks are usually of an inter-class nature, and as such were dismissed by the press and the judiciary as simply a bestial part of working-class life. The covert nature of many attacks means that, even if the event was reported, much of the context is lost, but it is impossible to ignore that attacks by labourers on farmers occurred within the *doxa*, usually deeply felt senses of injustice. Although the record is defective it appears that attempted, and successful, assassinations upon farmers and other local authorities were increasing. In 1808 a 'respectable' farmer was shot at close range whilst sitting on a Sunday December evening in his parlour at Hoo, near Rochester. The shot instantly killed him. A similar attempt had been made four years previously when a lone gunman fired through the windows of Parham House, Lewes. Other attacks occurred within different frameworks. For instance, in early March 1803 it was reported that two labourers had been committed to Gaol for a violent assault on Sir Edward Knatchbull on his Mersham estate, seemingly a clear act of class hatred. It transpired, however, that whilst Knatchbull was out on his estate he came across two men snaring hares: both were apprehended and lodged in the nearest public house. These men, it turned out, were part of the 4,000 strong encampment of blacksmiths and carpenters employed erecting a massive barracks upon the common at nearby Brabourne Lees. When the news reached the camp, a huge body of their comrades came to liberate them, upon which Knatchbull returned and read the Riot Act, for which he was promptly struck. Six of the ringleaders were captured when the Berkshire Militia came to the rescue of the besieged Knatchbull.¹³

Although by the outbreak of the Revolutionary Wars much of the south-east was long since enclosed, many commons and wastes still existed and were central to the survival of small-scale family dependant peasant production: as such, when they were enclosed such communities collapsed.¹⁴ Rising wartime prices gave Lords of the Manor a huge incentive to enclose any such land in their jurisdiction, with rising prices also increasing the incentive to protect game, and for farmers to restrict gleaning rights. This extensive attack on the rural poor's access to land was bound to provoke resistance. Whilst no systematic analysis is possible here, it is possible to make some gleanings. Between 1809-1810 resistance was made against various forms of land restrictions. The planned enclosure of the common at Thakeham provoked a resort to sheep stealing, attempts by Rev Pritchard at Slaugham to physically enclose his land and restrict poaching resulted in the new fence being pulled down

¹² In a rural context see P. King, 'Punishing Assault: The Transformation of Attitudes in the English Courts', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 43 (1996). Much work still needs to be done on the cultural significance of assault in the rural context.

¹³ *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 31 December 1804; *Brighton Herald*, 17 December 1808. *Kentish Gazette*, 9 September; *Maidstone Journal*, 13 September 1803.

along with notices warning against trespassing. At Shoreham in Kent a dispute over a 'yeoman' farmers right to occupy extensive gardens and orchards ended with four cottagers committed to Maidstone Gaol for having 'unlawfully ejected and removed the premises from him by force'. More work is needed to examine the response of the rural poor on dispossession within the south-east, after all the region where agricultural capital was most intensely invested in the war period.¹⁵ Such issues remained central to plebeian livelihoods in the 1810's and 1820's.

II: *'Unexampled severity in all classes of society'*¹⁶: 1810-15

Soon after eleven o'clock on a late September evening in 1810 the stables of the Rev. Robert Bingham of Maresfield, in the Sussex Weald, were discovered to be on fire. This not-in-itself-unusual incendiary fire marked the start of an incredibly bitter, paranoid and protracted battle over access to land in the Ashdown Forest, which at one point even resulted in the indictment of Rev. Bingham at the Sussex Assizes for arson. It later transpired Bingham had made himself unpopular through his attempts to 'check the disorderly conduct of some of his parishioners', or rather restrict their common rights. By late December the wrath of the oppressed parishioners had turned to the whole of the Maresfield elite. A series of letters were sent to 'several persons' in Maresfield threatening to set fire to their property, eat their sheep, and 'mame' their oxen; the letter sent to petty gentry Richard Jenner even had the affront to call him 'Dick'. The letters were backed up, so it was reported in the Lewes press, with 'other atrocious acts'. The threat of Jenner's avengers that *he would 'be shutted as you comes from markit'* prompted his life insurers, Phoenix Assurance, to offer a reward for information leading to the capture of the writer(s). The Phoenix offer of £100 was backed up with a further 200 guineas raised through a subscription, garnering 45 contributors, including both Jenner and Bingham. However, such financial offerings did nothing to stem the desire of the self proclaimed 'fifty good fellows' for revenge. At 1am on 17 January the letter writers made good their threats by firing Bingham's parsonage barn. About ten days earlier Lord Sheffield had instigated a campaign of destruction intended to remove at least some of the 'enchroachments' being made upon Ashdown Forest by cottagers and squatters. Bingham's earlier comments, leading to the first fire, had, it turned out, been followed with further encroachments carried out in open defiance to the forest authorities. Only a week after the

¹⁴ M. Reed, *The Peasantry of Nineteenth-Century England: A Neglected Class?*, *History Workshop Journal*, 18 (1984); G. Bourne, *Change in the Village* (1912; 1966 edition)

¹⁵ *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 14 November 1808, 27 February 1809 and 2 July; *Kentish Gazette*, 16 November 1810.

January fire Bingham's insurance company insisted that he be examined, as the fact that he had only just insured with them was highly suggestive of an attempted fraud and, on this basis, he was committed to trial at the Sussex Assizes. Before the trial the 'unfortunate' curate (a master of public relations) had printed an authentically appraised valuation of the furniture contained in his now ashy dwelling, the total being £680. That his policy was only for £500 was, it seems, evidence enough to acquit him.¹⁷

The Maresfield protests were unusual in both their intensity and the means adopted to suppress them. Until the victory at Waterloo the fragile balance between labour and capital in the countryside was largely maintained by the large numbers of men employed in the military and canal building, but so brittle was the balance that any threat to the precarious existence of the rural poor was likely to elicit a response. Localised subsistence problems occurred between 1810-13, particularly in 1811, when the Framfield vestry set-up a committee to examine all aspects of poor relief due to the 'unexampled severity in all classes of society'. Elsewhere other new expedients were adopted: at Westbourne a decision was made to not relieve any parishioners resident outside of the parish, instead setting-up some cottages to enable all such 'out-parishioners' to be 'brought back'. At Horsmonden in Kent contracts to maintain the poor were re-negotiated downwards - despite rising cereal prices.¹⁸

During the spring of 1811 several other incendiary fires occurred. Jane Nye, a fifteen year-old female servant, twice set fire to her master's house at Angmering: the same classist jury that acquitted Bingham finding her guilty. At Dover suspicions instantly rested upon smugglers when in early April some of the town's principal inhabitants were victims of a systematic arson campaign. Despite the examination of 'several suspicious people' no one

¹⁶ Quote from: Framfield Vestry Minute, 10 May 1811, ESCRO PAR 343/12/1.

¹⁷ *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 24 September 1810, 7, 14 and 21 January; *Brighton Herald*, 19 and 26 January, 2 February and 2 March 1811; Calendar and Indictment of Rev John Bingham, Sussex Lent Assizes 1811, PRO. Assi. 94/1662. Bingham was also indicted for sending Jenner the threatening letter (which he received on 16 December 1810):

Murder. Fire and revenge fifty of us are determined to keep our land or have revenge, therefore Parson churchwardens and farmers Your Barns + Houses shall burn if you take our land your lives two shall pay your sheep we will eat your Oxen we can mame, you stacks shall blaze Dick you shall be shutted as you comes from market or fares we are united as we are sworn to stand bye one another – fifty good fellows.

Such was the interest generated in the trial that soon after the acquittal a privately published account of the trial was advertised in the provincial press. R. Baxter, *The Trial of the Rev. Robert Bingham* (Lewes, 1811).

¹⁸ *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 1 April; Framfield Vestry Minute, 10 May, ESCRO PAR 343/12/1; Westbourne Vestry Minute, 21 April, WSCRO PAR 206/9/1; Horsmonden Vestry Minute, 3 and 10 April 1811, CKS P192/8/2; Wells, 'Social Protest', pp.135 and 158.

was committed. A strike of the journeymen carpenters at Lewes in July was equally unsuccessful, failing to secure higher wages despite rising living costs.¹⁹

Heavy rains and thunderstorms in mid August made worse an already poor harvest. Other than an incendiary fire at Petworth, the 'pressure of the times', as the Smarden vestry saw it, manifested itself in a distinct resort to non-arson covert protest forms: the period between September 1811 and September 1812 witnessed four cases of animal maiming, three cases of plant maiming and malicious damage respectively, as well as the attempted assassinations in Kent of a yeoman farmer and a clergyman's son.²⁰ Clearly the paucity of recorded cases of arson refutes Professor Wells' claim that the subsistence problem prompted a 'significant recourse to arson'. It is worth noting that John Sills' (an Ashford grocer) overall impression of 1811, as recorded in his diary, was the 'very rebellious' activities of the weavers at Manchester, Sheffield, Burnley, Leeds and 'a great many other places'. Northern Luddism was a greater topic of conversation and made a greater impression than any south-eastern events.²¹

The evidence for 1813 is even more emphatic. Wheat prices maintained their post 1812 harvest high until early May 1813, when increasingly strong evidence indicated the forthcoming harvest would be comparatively abundant, helped ease average prices at Mark Lane from an 1813 peak of 129 shillings a quarter to 96 shillings by the end of August, and when the new season's supplies had flooded the market by the beginning of December the price fell as low as 70 shillings. However, before the 1813 harvest there few cases of explicit protest, though notably affecting Maresfield again, and all apparently unrelated to the high price of grain, a clear indication that, as E.F. Genovese has convincingly delineated from the late eighteenth-century, wage levels, and thereby also relief levels in the context of the period, had replaced the price of basic consumables as the 'key element in proletarian living standards', though this is not to say that south-eastern consumers would never again protest against food prices but that the balance of motivations had shifted.²² The events after the

¹⁹ Calendar and Indictment of Jane Nye, Sussex Lent Assizes 1811, PRO Assi 94/1662; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 5 February and 15 July; *Kentish Gazette*, 12 and 16 April; *Maidstone Journal*, 16 April. The strike also coincided with the malicious destruction of a cygnet on the Ouse at Lewes; the proprietor of the paper-mill had only just stocked the river with swans: *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 15 July 1811.

²⁰ *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 12 August, 4 and 25 November 1811, 31 August and 7 September 1812; *Kentish Gazette*, 27 September, 15 October 1811, 14 January, 11 February, 3 March, 2 June, and 10 July 1812; Indictment of John Ward for animal maiming, Kent Lent Assizes 1812, PRO Assi 94/1672.

²¹ Wells, 'Social Protest', p.158; 'Memo of 1811', Diary of John Sills (grocer), Ashford, 1809-1821, CKS U442 Z6/1. Three prisoners also set fire to Dartford gaol in a bungled attempt to escape in December 1812: *Maidstone Journal*, 23 March 1813. For a useful if flawed account of the 1811 'Luddite Riots' see M. Thomis, *The Luddites: Machine Breaking in Regency England* (London, 1970), a more nuanced account is provided in M. Berg, *The Age of Manufactures, 1700-1820* (London, 1985).

²² *Kentish Gazette*, January to December 1813. E.F. Genovese, 'The many faces of moral economy; a contribution to a debate', *Past and Present*, 58 (1973); Wells, 'The Moral Economy of the English

harvest followed the same trend: the dramatic, and sustained, fall in the price of wheat prompted localised wage reductions and unemployment, made even worse by the poor hop and fruit harvests, and provoked, between August and October, several cases of plant maiming and arson, including threats of arson made against farmer Hodson, prompting him to establish a nightly watch at his East Dean farm – an arson black spot.²³

Further proof of the dire condition of the poor throughout the exceptionally harsh winter - the worst since 1776 - was offered by the activities of the relief committee at Canterbury: the second distribution in early February 1814 relieved nearly 6,000 people from the City 'and the vicinity', with the third distribution in early March relieving 5,642 people. At Hythe the philanthropist James Webb gave £2,000 to widows, orphans and 'decayed tradesmen and distressed labourers'. Despite the harsh winter and falling employment, there was no noticeable resort to acts of protest. Other than the systematic destruction of the windows of the wealthy inhabitants at Margate in January, the south-east was remarkably quiescent, not least because of the considerable acts of charity helped to stop low murmurs of discontent developing into outright acts of protest. Indeed, 1814 proved remarkable for being one of only two years between 1790 and 1850 in that there were no reported cases of arson in the south-east. This relative quietude was bolstered by a good harvest, though much of the wheat on the 'poor lands' in East Kent suffered from blight. The Hellingly vestry even decided to unusually make note of the fact that when they met in early August they received no applications for relief: '*This may be considered a Unique of the kind, such a circumstance has not been known to have occurred for many years*'.²⁴

Lower grain prices, however, threatened the newfound wealth of many farmers with news of the proposed Corn Importation Bill provoking furious reactions. An initial round of petitioning in the early summer of 1814 helped to delay the introduction of the Bill into the

Countryside', p.229. A recurrence of the earlier disputes at Maresfield lead to 'an old offender' and his three sons committed to trial for having set fire to a faggot stack, used arsenic to poison a horse, stolen and killed several sheep, as well as breaking into and robbing upwards of 20 granaries, barns and stacks. At Gillingham in mid May when two boys were detected stealing clover the elder boy swore he would make his revenge; a few days later one of farmer Lock's hay-stacks was set on fire. Later that month Thomas Honeysett, an agricultural labourer, was committed to trial for maliciously cutting over 1,000 hop bines at Stone-in-Oxney – far from a 'community of grain'. *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 22 February; *Kentish Gazette*, 20 April, 21 May, and 4 June; *Maidstone Journal*, 1 June; Indictments of Thomas Honeysett for cutting upwards of 1,000 hop bines, and Edward Garland for arson, Kent Summer Assizes 1813, PRO Assi 94/1686.

²³ *Kentish Gazette*, 27 July, 3 and 7 September, and 29 October; *Times*, 25 August, 1 and 5 October; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 11 October 1813.

²⁴ *Kentish Gazette*, 11 and 25 January, 4 February, and 11 March; E. Jones, *Seasons and Prices: the Role of the Weather in English Agricultural History* (Bury St. Edmunds, 1964), pp.159-160. Hellingly Vestry Minute, 1 August, ESCRO PAR 375/12/3. The produce of one sixteen-acre field in East Kent was so defective that it had to be fed to the pigs: *Maidstone Journal*, 30 August. The cause of a fire, which destroyed a windmill at Bearsted (Kent) in early January, despite suspiciously starting at 2am was not ascertained: *Kentish Gazette*, 14 January 1814.

House of Commons but did not prevent it altogether. When the Bill was finally introduced, strong resistance was again offered, uniting the Kent Agriculturalists, meeting at Maidstone, in opposition. 'England ought to be supplied by the corn from its own soil. We should not apply to France for that purpose, for France could in no way be depended upon in time of scarcity'. Besides, so claimed the Grandee Sir Brook Brydges, the high price of corn had benefited labourers as their wages had risen proportionately more than grain. A similar claim from the Earl of Darnley prompted a public 'uproar', forcing the farmers to adjourn the meeting to a nearby Inn to pass their resolution. Whilst 'numerous' other meetings occurred in south-eastern market towns throughout February and March, it was the remarks made at Maidstone that generated the most spectacular response. In early March several 'inflammatory handbills' were circulated throughout Canterbury, attacking the Maidstone speakers for hiding their arrogance behind a petard of paternalism and for their economic naivety. On the afternoon of Wednesday, 9 March, a number of 'young people', after assembling in the High Street with an effigy of the Earl of Darnley, paraded through the streets for several hours before congregating at the Guildhall in the early evening where the effigy was burnt to ecstatic hisses and groans. The arrival of the peace officers, however, provoked a general tumult, made worse by the seizure of John Jarman, 'a labourer of the neighbourhood'. His brother shouted out 'rescue', leading to his seizure as well. The crowd now incensed went on a spree of destruction, breaking the windows of John Baker, the Canterbury MP, and D.J. Parker, a 'respectable' inhabitant. It was John Sills, an Ashford grocer and diarist, though, who best predicted the effects of the Corn Law:

This law is to compel the Inhabitants of England to eat their Corn at what price they [parliament] likes, surely... this Law will end bad.²⁵

III: *'To be paid for what good they actually do'*²⁶: 1815-1821

With the victory at Waterloo in June 1815, the new Corn Law took on a new significance. Between 1814 and 1815 a quarter of a million men were demobilised, with further significant reductions in the next few years, not least in the staffing at Naval yards, a process than began at the substantial Kentish yards at Woolwich and Chatham as early as mid September 1815.²⁷ By late 1815 troops were daily arriving back from Calais, effectively putting an instant strain

²⁵ *Times*, 6 June 1814, 16 February and 13 March; *Maidstone Journal*, 14 February; *Maidstone Gazette*, 7 and 14 March; *Kentish Gazette*, 10 March. Diary entry of John Sills March/April 1815, CKS U442 Z6/1.

²⁶ Quote from: Framfield Vestry Minute, 4 February 1819, ESCRO PAR 343/12/1.

²⁷ C. Emsley, *Crime and Society in England 1750-1900* (London, 1996), p.37; *Maidstone Journal*, 26 September 1815.

on Kentish infrastructure. Many of the demobbed soldiers did not return to their home counties, at least not immediately, but instead stayed in the south-east. This combined with the decision to stand down the militia, announced by a circular from the War Office in early January 1816, and orders in the early months of 1817 to reduce the cavalry depot at Maidstone and cut the staff and the hours worked at Chatham dockyard, lead to swamping of local labour markets.²⁸

In terms of popular protest the effects were not immediately apparent. The relative calm of 1814 was restored after the Maidstone debacle, indeed before the harvest there was only one reported case of arson, and this was an apparent attempt to hide the theft of £40 from a windmill at Calverton near Tunbridge Wells. Unemployment, though, was enough of a problem for the Farningham vestry to resolve in early April on extending the workhouse specifically to employ those out of work.²⁹ The 1815 harvest was above average, despite the fact that much wheat suffered from blight. A long summer drought meant that the harvest was completed in record time, thus depressing harvest earnings. The drought also meant that by September the pastures were so stunted that farmers were forced to feed their cattle expensive hay. Many though simply sent their cattle to market, provoking a drastic slump in prices, mirroring the continued decline in the grain price.³⁰

Early rent and tithe reductions garnered considerable publicity in the provincial press, adding grist to the mill of other farmers clamouring for cuts. Refusals by tithe holders inevitably provoked resentment and retaliation, *something taken to extremes by the vindictive* Westbourne vestry who decided to make the tithe rateable. Plebeian responses appear to have been initially muted, partially due to the extensions in poor relief, but from early November this dramatically changed as it became increasingly apparent that the steep rise in post-harvest unemployment would deepen.³¹

²⁸ *Maidstone Journal*, 26 December 1815 and 9 January 1816; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 17 February; *Kentish Gazette*, 18 and 25 February 1817.

²⁹ *Kentish Gazette*, 9 June, *The Times*, 12 June; Farningham Vestry Minute, 5 April 1815, CKS P145/8/8.

³⁰ *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 21 August; Jones, *Seasons and Prices*, p.160; *Maidstone Journal*, 31 October. The increased availability of portable threshing machines and the heightened affordability of static threshing machines were also crucial in reducing post-harvest employment opportunities. At Lewes Messrs. Morley, self-styled, makers of threshing machines and engines, offered for sale for the first time a portable three-horse powered machine which only required three boys and one man to operate, thus offering a substantial reduction in the labour costs in comparison to earlier threshing machine. The use of boys in the operation of threshing machines however could be problematic. In late August a seven or eight year-old boy operating a machine at Minster on the Isle of Sheppey died after mangling his head and body from falling between two wheels in the mechanism. *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 23 October; *Kentish Gazette*, 1 September 1815.

³¹ *Kentish Gazette*, 27 October and 24 November; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 20 November; Westbourne Vestry Minute, 4 February 1816, WSCRO PAR206/9/1.

The Weybridge vestry in early December decided to make a substantial investment in setting up a flax cleaning operation in the workhouse to employ both those resident in the house and the increasingly burdensome out-poor. Their Mickleham counterparts also resolved that when an application was made for relief due to unemployment the claimant was to 'enquire of the neighbouring occupiers for work', and then if they were unsuccessful, as they were likely to be, they were to be employed by the surveyors on the roads. If other parishes needed a wake-up call then a dramatic incendiary fire on a massive stack of faggots at Swanscombe in Kent should have provided it. The fire was seen as far away as London, whilst a fire at Linton, near Maidstone, on Christmas Eve, helped to further concentrate minds. The next twelve months would see the most dramatic outbreak of both overt and covert protest in the south-east since the 1800-01 crisis.³²

Between late March and the end of May 1816 East Anglia witnessed what have been described as 'the first concerted series of collective protests by agricultural labourers', encompassing attacks on machinery, including threshing machinery, enclosure and food riots as well as attempts to procure higher wages and/or relief. In an inspiring attempt to offer some explanation as to why the protests were confined to East Anglia, Andrew Charlesworth has tentatively suggested that the high level of capitalisation of agriculture in the disturbed areas meant that, when grain prices dropped, cost cuts were even more imperative. However, much the same factors were operational in parts of the south-east: the Isle of Thanet and the coastal plains of West Sussex was some of the most fertile land in England and was also highly capitalised. Moreover, outside of these traditional grain-growing areas the spread of corn cultivation, including onto marginal lands, during the previous 25 years meant that the already discussed difficulties facing the livestock market - a huge jolt in itself to pastoral communities - were actually intensified by the drop in cereal prices. As such the cost imperative for smaller mixed farmers, not least in the Weald, was actually more pressing, prompting all non-family labour to be laid-off. Such an analysis therefore would make it even more baffling if south-eastern labourers did not resort to acts of defiance. In actuality they did, with covert protests occurring on an unprecedented scale.³³

In 1816 there was a total of twelve recorded incendiary fires, surpassing the previous peak of eight achieved in 1800. Whilst this in itself is important, it hides the complex spatial

³² Weybridge Vestry Minute, 7 December, SHC 2384/3/4/ii; Mickleham Vestry Minute, 10 December, SHC PSH/MIC/9/1; *Kentish Gazette*, 7 November, 29 December 1815, and 5 January 1816.

³³ Charlesworth, *A Comparative Study*, pp.4-11; P. Brandon and B. Short, *The South East from AD 1000* (London, 1990), chapter 5; R. Quested, *The Isle of Thanet Farming Community. An Agrarian History of Easternmost Kent: Outlines from Early Times to 1993* (Wye, 1996). For a useful discussion of some of the points relating to Thanet but in a national context see: M. Overton, *Agricultural Revolution in England: The Transformation of the Agrarian Economy 1500-1850* (Cambridge, 1996), chapters 3 and 4.

truth of the resort to arson. Nine of the twelve fires occurred in Kent, with only one in Sussex, again at Maresfield, and by including the two fires that occurred in late 1815 Kent's share rises to eleven fires out of fourteen, with five occurring within a six-mile radius of Maidstone between December 1815 and April 1816.³⁴ This concentration coincided with intense activity in the local paper industry. A threatening letter sent to a proprietor of a Maidstone paper mill in November 1815 prompted the Society of Journeymen Papermakers into offering a £30 reward, presumably to fend off the likely suspicions of the victim. A cost-cutting decision to employ the apprentices from Mr. C. Brenchley's paper mill led to a strike of the Journeymen papermakers at Messrs S and C Wise's Maidstone mill. However, it was the mechanisation of paper-mills, and the consequent reduction in employment, that was most contentious, the Maidstone paper-makers even petitioning parliament for relief and the removal of all machinery in the paper making process.³⁵

Before Swing few machines had made their way into the farmyard. The use of winnowing machines certainly increased throughout the Napoleonic Wars, to the point that by 1816, of the arable farmers forced to sell their stock, more had them than not; they were certainly in more general use than threshing machines.³⁶ Threshing machines were far more expensive than winnowing machines but were (potentially) far more labour saving. Despite the resentment that must have been felt by any worker displaced by a threshing machine prior to 1816, this resentment is barely to be found in the archive. In 1791 the owner of the first machine in Surrey was *threatened with arson* 'which was expected to be done'. In 1806 arsonists at East Dean in Sussex discussed whether setting fire to an oat stack would destroy the threshing machine kept in an adjacent barn. The record for the south-east is without doubt defective, but it is worth considering that, as threshing by flail was an incredibly arduous and back-breaking task in areas not subject to seasonal or perma-unemployment threshing, machines *could* actually be welcomed by the labouring community. As Dr. Bawn has shown, in January 1831 a Dorset farmer, after discontinuing the use of his machine, could not find threshers, and was therefore forced to set his own men to work with the flail. His labourers responded by asking him to re-instate the machine. The machine breaking activities of the

³⁴ See Appendix 2.3. Mereworth: *Maidstone Journal*, 16 January; Langley: *Maidstone Journal*, 27 February; West Malling: *Maidstone Journal*, 26 March; Maresfield: *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 1 April; Hollingbourne: *Maidstone Journal*, 30 April; Milton: *Kentish Gazette*, 7 May; Godalming: Indictment of James Andrews, Surrey Summer Assizes 1816, PRO Assi 94/1740; Darenth: Indictment of George Gough, Kent Summer Assizes 1816, PRO Assi 94/1737; Fant: *Maidstone Gazette*, 10 September; East Farleigh: *Maidstone Journal*, 10 September; Thorpe: Indictment William Pinnock, Surrey Lent Assizes 1817, PRO Assi 94/1753; Folkestone: *Kentish Gazette*, 24 Dec 1816.

³⁵ *Maidstone Gazette*, 21 November 1815, 13 February and 12 March 1816.

³⁶ Evidence for the use of winnowing machines comes from the *Kentish Gazette*, *Maidstone Journal* and *Maidstone Gazette*, January – December 1816. No systematic research, of which I am aware, has

East Anglian gangs in 1816 were also replicated in the south-east. Incendiarists at Godalming in June set fire to a barn in order to destroy the farmers' threshing machine – effectively the only way to destroy a machine without resort to overt acts of aggression.³⁷

The rapidly rising cost of provisions from mid April was central to the East Anglian experience. As Andrew Charlesworth puts it: '[it was] not surprising... that lower food prices should be one of the main demands at a number of the demonstrations and that shopkeepers and millers should be attacked by the protestors'. This was also the case in the south-east. In late April a Milton grocer's shop was targeted by incendiarists. A Chatham fruiterer had his windows broken by the symbolically drawn bayonets of a military assemblage in revenge for giving evidence against one of their (allegedly) thieving comrades. *Taxation populaire* incidents at Herstmonceaux and Battle provided explicit evidence of not only the ability of south-eastern labourers to organise – if that was ever in doubt – but that they did organise to act overtly in the spring of 1816.³⁸

Even the hop industry did not escape the rising tide of protest actions. The exceptionally wet weather of the spring and summer retarded hop growth, thus not only delaying the normal tasks in the hop field – at his Waltham farm in east Kent Thomas Tritton did not start stringing the hops till 4 July – but also reducing the yields. The cutting of hop bines in the College hop-grounds near Maidstone in late May generated much publicity. Moreover, most of the incendiary fires near Maidstone occurred in hop parishes.³⁹

The authorities in the vicinity of Maidstone had little option but to act, especially as from late April the price of grain and other provisions started to rise sharply. A meeting of the Maidstone vestry in mid April unanimously agreed upon a proposed plan to enclose fifteen acres of Barming Heath 'to give occupation to the labouring poor out of work'. This scheme was copied at nearby Boxley where an application was made to the Lord of the Manor 'for some waste to be cultivated by the poor'.⁴⁰ In Sussex the East Hoathly vestry decided to buy a field from the parish priest to employ the poor, whereas at Battle problems in collecting the poor rates forced the vestry to postpone a meeting. When they did meet they

been carried out on the use of winnowing machines – a glaring omission in light of their importance as often the only 'machine' used in farming.

³⁷ Wells, 'Social Protest', p.158; Wells, 'The Moral Economy of the English Countryside', p.232; K. Bawn, *Social Protest, Popular Disturbances and Public Order in Dorset, 1790-1838* (unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Reading, 1984) p.79; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 1 July; Indictment of James Andrews for arson, Surrey Summer Assizes 1816, PRO Assi 94/1740.

³⁸ Charlesworth, *A Comparative Study*, pp. 2-12; *Kentish Gazette*, 7 May; *Maidstone Journal*, 2 April 1816; Wells, 'Social Protest', p.159; A. Charlesworth, B. Short and R. Wells, 'Riots and Unrest', p.75, in F. Leslie and R. Short (ed.), *An Historical Atlas of Sussex* (Chichester, 1999).

³⁹ Farming Diary entry of Thomas Tritton, 4 July, CKS U2940 E1; *Maidstone Journal*, 28 May 1816.

⁴⁰ *Maidstone Journal*, 23 April; Boxley Vestry Minute, 1 May 1816, CKS P40/8/1.

decided to appoint an assistant overseer to effectively manage the increasingly divisive relief system.⁴¹

The 1816 harvest only added to these problems. The wet spring retarded growth in hop-fields and hay-meadows; so delayed and meagre was the hay-harvest that as late August the Lewes press noted that only one man was so employed at Southease. By the 10 August the 'abundant' wheat harvest at Ramsgate had started. However, at Herne and Whitstable, a mere fifteen miles distant, the harvest did not start until a fortnight later, the latest it had started since the disastrous harvest of 1799. This was the case in most of the south-east, but even this was little compared to the violent storms at the very end of August and early September, which flattened much of the standing corn, ruined the hops and stripped fruit from the trees. This catastrophe was followed by two days of snow and then a series of frosty mornings intermingled with occasional bouts of hail. Much of the corn was still to be harvested in parts of Kent as late as mid October. Indeed farmer Tritton at Waltham had to celebrate harvest home on 15 October as the Michaelmas fair was in only four days time, despite the fact that he still had wheat to carry in.⁴²

Despite the bleak implications there was no intensification in the level of protest. Further parochial resorts to employment generation schemes helped to partially mollify some labourers, thus undermining the potential collective base for mass overt action, although many of the new expedients would prove to be unsustainable.⁴³ The resentment felt by many labourers towards farmers, though, was clearly discernible in many covert and other not quite so covert acts, including arson and attempted assassinations. One such attempt by four gunmen on Charles Tadman, a Higham farmer, returning from Rochester market in mid

⁴¹ East Hoathly Vestry Minute, 28 February, ESCRO PAR378/12/3; Battle Vestry Minutes, 8 and 22 April 1816, ESCRO PAR236/12/1/2.

⁴² *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 5 August; *Maidstone Journal*, 13 and 27 August; *Maidstone Gazette*, 27 August, 10 September and 15 October; *Kentish Gazette*, 3 September. Farming Diary entry of Thomas Tritton, 15, 16 and 19 October 1816, CKS U2940 E1.

⁴³ For instance the Canterbury parishes of Westgate and St. Dunstons collaborated to purchase some gravel pits to employ *all* able bodied male paupers at 1/- to 1/6 a day. The *Kentish Gazette* reported approvingly of the effect of the well-established parish farms at Benenden, Cranbrook (where an incredible total of 499 acres was farmed by the poor) and Sissinghurst on employing those out of work: 'At a time when so many farms are... unoccupied in several parts of the kingdom... when such numbers of industrious labourers also complain that they can find no work, it is well worth consideration'. Parish vestry minutes abound with schemes to employ the poor at the lowest possible cost, for instance the Eastbourne vestry introduced at least three different employment policies in as many months. More ominously however was the new policy at Long Ditton, Surrey, relief to the out door poor was to be reduced as it could no longer be afforded. Similarly at Framfield only a week after meeting to devise a plan to employ those out of work the vestry resolved to not to relief any person capable of work beyond what he has earned. *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 9 December; *Kentish Gazette*, 31 December; Eastbourne Vestry Minute, 28 October, 9 November, 16 and 23 December, ESCRO DE/A1/3; Long Ditton Vestry Minute, 1 December, SHC 3833/5/2; Framfield Vestry Minutes, 10 and 17 December 1816, ESCRO PAR 343/12/1.

December, even prompted the Government to offer a £50 reward.⁴⁴ The dismal hop harvest generated tensions on the Barming farm of Mr. Ellis - the biggest hop producer in England. Ellis' Irish employees were 'dissatisfied' with the fact they were earning less than the local women pickers, something the xenophobic *Maidstone Journal* put down to the superior work rate of the women. Their dissatisfaction led to an armed confrontation with Ellis' watchmen, who were only saved from their violent fate by a gang of hop-pickers from another of Ellis' farms turning up to offer their all-too willing help in beating off the Irish. Eight of the Irish aggressors were seized but only the four 'most daring' were committed to trial. The most dramatic outbreak, however, occurred at Guildford where the population 'in consequence of a sudden rise in the price of bread' attempted to affect a reduction in its price by resort to food riot. The 'moral economy' was still alive and well in south-eastern England.⁴⁵

Compared to 1816 the next five years would prove to be relatively serene. It was the juxtaposition of a whole series of factors that made 1816 such a hotbed of disaffection: rising prices, poor spring and summer weather ruining the grain, fruit and hop harvests; the increased use of machinery in both agriculture and paper-making; and the immediate and visible effects of the mass-demobbing, combined with the general economic downturn which hit agriculture particularly hard. It is worth noting that in Sussex convictions for the Game Laws more than doubled in 1816 compared to 1815, a level of convictions that would not be matched again until the early 1820's.⁴⁶

The level of poaching convictions is a useful shorthand for the general rise in crime in the post-Napoleonic south-east. The dramatic rise in crime levels – almost solely attributable to property appropriation - has been well described elsewhere,⁴⁷ however a few points are worth considering. Many crimes were increasingly committed by those not

⁴⁴ Indictment of William Pinnock, Surrey Lent Assizes 1817, PRO Assi 94/1753; *Kentish Gazette*, 31 December 1816.

⁴⁵ *Maidstone Journal*, 1 October; *Kentish Gazette*, 25 October 1816.

⁴⁶

| | Summary Convictions | Convicted by Indictment | Total | | Summary Convictions | Convicted by Indictment | Total |
|------|------------------------|----------------------------|-------|------|------------------------|----------------------------|-------|
| 1814 | 29 | 0 | 29 | 1818 | 45 | 2 | 47 |
| 1815 | 28 | 0 | 28 | 1819 | 36 | 2 | 38 |
| 1816 | 60 | 0 | 60 | 1820 | 43 | 1 | 44 |
| 1817 | 45 | 5 | 50 | | | | |

Source: Edward Twopenny, Clerk to North Division of the Lathe of Aylesford Bench, Rochester, to Sidmouth, 29 December 1821, enclosing a report on convictions under the Game Laws, 1814-20, PRO HO 52/2, ff.323-5.

⁴⁷ P. King, *Crime, Justice, and Discretion in England, 1740-1820* (Oxford, 2000), particularly chapter 5, part 4; C. Emsley, *Policing and It's Context 1750-1870* (London, 1983), especially chapter 3; *Idem.*, *Crime and Society*; D. Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London, 1982); Wells, 'Social Protest'. For an excellent essay which considers many of these issues in the context of the recent proliferation of crime studies see J. Innes and J. Styles, 'The Crime Wave: recent writing on crime and criminal justice in eighteenth-century England', in A. Wilson (ed.), *Rethinking Social History: English Society 1570-1920 and it's Interpretation* (Manchester, 1993).

motivated by subsistence but by profit, and as such were highly organised along similar lines to smuggling gangs. Between September and October 1818 there were fifteen burglaries in the Kent parishes of Newnham, Doddington and Linstead. This gang of burglars were also suspected of plundering on the same October evening the homes of Edward Hasted, a magistrate, at Hollingbourne, and Mr. Springate at Linton, about fifteen miles away from Newnham. The theft of 101 sheep in one daring raid at Yalding in September 1818 took sheep-stealing to new levels of organisation; the sheep were presumably sold to another farmer or an implicated butcher. A gang of sheep-stealers in the Croydon area had also dabbled in highway robbery and burglary, and were connected to the notorious 'Norwood Gang'. Brighton by early 1821 was supposed to be 'infested' with thieves travelling from London to do their 'work'.⁴⁸

Despite the deepening depression and rising unemployment, the incidence of arson until the crisis year of 1822 failed to maintain the level of 1816 (see Appendix 2.3). Between 1817 and 1821 30 cases were recorded, of which fifteen occurred in Kent, thereby repeating the pattern established in 1816. Moreover, these 30 cases represented a doubling of the toll for the five-year period before 1816, a substantial increase even if the six fires caused by an infamous Morden incendiary in 1817 are not included. Whilst these statistics in themselves do not represent any *actual* reality they are representative as the samples generated for both periods labour under the same archival difficulties. However, poverty and oppression did not automatically result in cases of arson or the maiming of animals: rather oppression could be resisted in many forms, or in the short term even absorbed, as evidenced in 1817 when the momentum gathered in 1816 was almost totally lost. Beyond the raising of petitions calling for parliamentary reform by south-eastern radicals, the renewed petitioning of the Maidstone paper-makers against machinery, and the destruction of the new fences erected on the common at Kingston-upon-Thames (under a Parliamentary Enclosure Act), the spring of 1817 was, compared to 1816, relatively unaffected by popular protests. The two cases of arson in Kent during 1817 represented a substantial fall compared to the nine cases in 1816. A similar pattern was evident elsewhere. Dr. Archer has detected that in Suffolk compared to the 22 cases in 1816 there were only seven in 1817, indeed it was not until 1822 that the level of 1816 was again reached, and this despite the effective suppression of the 1816 uprisings in East Anglia which one may have expected to generate new resentments and drive protest underground.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ *Times*, 7 and 19 November 1817, 17 September and 30 October 1818; John Bates, Brighton, to Lord Sidmouth, 28 March 1821, PRO HO 52/2, f.153.

⁴⁹ *Times*, 10 March and 18 December 1817; Indictment of William Longhurst, labourer, for arson, Surrey Lent Assizes 1818, PRO Assi 94/1778; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 27 January; *Kentish Gazette*,

In reality the ever-increasing resort to the parish financed by ever higher poor rates in the south-east helped to turn potential protests into a sullen discontent. One can almost feel Steven Hover's despair when in June 1820 he applied for relief from the Heathfield vestry drunk; after insulting and abusing the vestry members he refused the five shillings and a chaldron of coal offered to him, threatening to leave his family to the mercy of the parish. Hover's case combines all aspects of the shift in focus in the application of the poor laws; as the parish was responsible for the welfare of its people it had little option but to allow those in need some form of assistance. However, as this assistance was becoming ever more burdensome, there was a drive to cut costs, to get some return for individual rate-payers and to increasingly attach moral stipulations to the giving of relief. For instance, the Midhurst vestry resolved not to allow any relief to those who did not attend divine service. Even more likely to generate resentment was the decision by the newly formed Hougham select vestry to put up a list of the out-poor every month on the church door and 'in 2 or 3 more conspicuous places' in a sad belief that robbing the poor of even more dignity would stop them applying for relief.⁵⁰ Occasionally this moral emphasis would in itself provoke resistance. An incendiary fire on a faggot stack of William Borer, a Henfield farmer and parish officer, was the result of Borer fining John Fillery a fortnight earlier for selling fruit on the Sabbath. Sometimes this 'moral' dimension was introduced almost as an unknowing reflex action, an unthinking pronouncement with no attempt to empathise with anyone it may affect. When Rev. Barwick at Westwell near Ashford was three times the victim of incendiaries within a fortnight, he declared that he was 'unconscious of giving offence to anyone'.⁵¹ The ideologically-driven belief in employing those out of work on menial work, which had little if any utility let alone any tangible financial benefit to the parish, 'instead of paying the pauper in idleness' similarly generated tensions. Numerous were the disputes between vestries and those who refused to perform the work set in order to receive their relief. Normally they were dealt with summarily but could be treated more severely: two young labourers from Witley, deep in the Surrey Weald, were even indicted at the Quarter Sessions for refusing to do the work set by the parish guardian.⁵²

That the gap that existed between farmers and labourers before the outbreak of the Napoleonic Wars grew into an unbridgeable gulf during the war is an accepted historical

13 May; Indictment of John Cox for the destruction of new enclosures, Surrey Midsummer Quarter Sessions 1817, SHC QS 2/6.

⁵⁰ Heathfield Vestry Minute, 28 June 1820, ESCRO PAR 372/12/1; Midhurst Vestry Minute, 25 April 1817, WSCRO PAR 138/12/1; Hougham Select Vestry Minute, 5 October 1819, CCA U3/49/8/1.

⁵¹ *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 23 August 1819; *Kentish Gazette*, 17 November; *Maidstone Journal*, 21 November 1820.

⁵² Woodnesborough Vestry Minute, 9 May 1823, CCA U3/64/8/16; Indictment of John Davis and John Chandler, Surrey Adjourned Quarter Sessions March 1820, SHC QS 2/6.

orthodoxy and central to the understanding of post war and pre-Swing protest. New Vestry expedients and the exploitation of unemployed labourers by large farmers – something facilitated to an even greater degree by the new Select Vestry Act of 1819, which weighted votes by rateable value – could place labourer against labourer creating inter-class hostility. Widespread unemployment combined with an increasing labour supply meant that farmers could effectively set wages *and* cherry pick the most productive, most reliable, and least truculent labourers. The same too could be applied to parish contracts; the least expensive and least troublesome artisans could be awarded lucrative parish work at the expense of their politically active or, even in some parishes, non-conformist competitors.

Discrimination not only generated a resort to covert protest but also helped to further politicise agricultural labourers. In late 1820 a series of threatening letters, invariably signed under the pseudonym of the name of a Kentish town, were received by various dignitaries from the High Sheriff of Gloucestershire, the Mayor of Leicester to Aldermen at Nottingham and Rochester. The culprit was traced to the vicinity of Maidstone. He was, according to the Home Office source, a man ‘of very bad character’ without the means ‘of getting a shilling’ who spent his time inciting the lower orders in the neighbourhood by ‘reading aloud newspapers and political pamphlets, adding his own comments’.⁵³

IV: ‘*Never in a more peaceful and tranquil state*’?⁵⁴: 1821-1828

The late spring and early Summer of 1821 were marked by a raft of rent reductions, partly in response to continuing economic pressures but also to the escalation in poor rates. Professor Wells has noted that in terms of the bankruptcy of farmers the period 1821-3 represented the worst post-war period, and as such it is not surprising that cost savings were not passed on to their labourers.⁵⁵ The combination of low wages, the increased use of threshing machines and a bad harvest – caused by the persistently wet summer and autumn – all helped to make the 1821 harvest and post-harvest period particularly bad for labourers. These factors generated rich possibilities for radical agitation. Indeed, the mid-July coronation of George IV generated an unprecedented two-night campaign of malicious damage by Canterbury ultra-radicals: stones were thrown against the Cathedral Gate whilst the illuminated windows of many of those celebrating the new Monarch were smashed through with bricks, suggesting

⁵³ William Phillips Cary, Tovil, to Sidmouth, 30 December 1820, PRO HO 52/1, f.617.

⁵⁴ Quote from: *Maidstone Journal*, 12 April 1822.

⁵⁵ *Brighton Gazette*, 24 May; *Kentish Gazette*, 1 and 29 June, 3 July; *Maidstone Journal*, 10 July 1821. Wells, ‘Social Protest’, p.129.

that these attacks were planned. It was the harvest, however, that would portentously herald the most intense protest since 1816.⁵⁶

Continual rains throughout August followed earlier signs of 'red rust', by early September not only was the corn badly damaged but where it had been flattened the grain started to sprout. Despite this the harvest did require large amounts of people at short notice to reap and gather the crop when conditions so allowed. The weather in a sense actually increased the labourers' bargaining position, so imperative was it that the harvest was gathered in the short periods of good weather that if the labourers refused to work the crop could be damaged yet further. It was with this base that from mid August there was considerable proto-unionist activity by field labourers. Five labourers from *Newchurch and Bilsington* were taken into custody for an attempt to raise and set wages, in tandem with many others, throughout the whole of *Romney Marsh*, for which five men were tried at the New Romney Michaelmas Quarter Sessions, receiving varying from eighteen months to one day. The *Sussex Weekly Advertiser* also reported that several harvest gangs who had previously made specific arrangements had gone on strike to increase their harvest fee.⁵⁷

The post-harvest period was unsurprisingly marked by further farm rent and tithe reductions, although many of the farms that fell vacant at Michaelmas failed to find new tenants. Nowhere was this more marked than in the Weald, where by January 1822 there were, a possibly exaggerated, nineteen untenanted farms. The identification by labourers of the, especially small, farmers' acute difficulties initially, at least, blunted plebeian responses, shifting the focus from individual farmers to parish vestries. An initially successful attempt by nine labourers, employed by the Hellingly vestry, to force the parish officer into giving them extra relief received publicity in Sussex press when the men were committed to the House of Correction at Lewes. Such stories served as a useful warning to others. Elsewhere distress brought into starker relief long-running disputes. For instance, a long-running dispute over the magistrates' attempts to control the extensive and rich Queenborough oyster fisheries took a decidedly violent turn when a plot was uncovered in which the aggrieved fishermen were to intercept the magistrates on their return from the Assizes and murder them. Nevertheless in early September the Mayor was assaulted in broad daylight by the 'mob', who later that evening attempted to demolish the houses of the members of the corporation and murder the inhabitants. The military were called from Sheerness and restored order. In the following days the most riotous individuals were apprehended and committed to trial, thereby adding to already high passions; Mayor Greet was three times targeted by animal

⁵⁶ *Kentish Gazette*, 24 July; *Maidstone Journal*, 31 July 1821.

⁵⁷ *Brighton Gazette*, 9 August; *Maidstone Journal*, 11 September. *Kentish Gazette*, 19 October; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 27 August 1821.

maimers in the space of a fortnight, a ram was killed by poison on 21 October, two heifers were poisoned at the beginning of November, with a further four heifers killed by poison before 9 November, prompting the Home Office to offer an unusually high £500 reward.⁵⁸

The winter of 1821-2 brought further evidence of the deepening tensions in the countryside. An incendiary fire occurred at Pagham; horses were maimed at Westfield, near Hastings, and sheep at Benenden; new enclosures were destroyed at Egham and a dam was destroyed at Chichester; whilst the mass destruction of apple trees occurred at Ospringe, near Faversham. All this suggests that tensions were not geographically specific but increasingly manifested through a resort to protest throughout the south-east.⁵⁹

After early February, however, the protest became both more visible and more intense. From mid February to the beginning of April nine cases of incendiarism occurred, seven of which blighted Kentish property. Farmer Searle at Folkington, near Alfriston, not only lost various stacks and a barn full of wheat but also, and, presumably it was no coincidence, a threshing machine. At Denton Court in Gravesend Mr. Baker also fell prey to the incendiarist's hand for operating a threshing machine. A few minutes after the fire was discovered, a local man was knocked down by a man who suddenly dropped a light and ran off. Two labourers were also apprehended on suspicion of having set fire to Rev. Monius' parsonage barn at Ringwould. 'Two strangers' were supposed to have been the culprits behind the destruction of a huge wheat stack high on the North Downs at Stalisfield. Several 'southern Kent' farmers also received incendiary letters. That the spate of incendiary fires prompted a rash of farmers to take out insurance policies on their farms for the first time was no surprise to *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*. This period represented the most serious outbreak of arson attacks since the spring of 1816. Threshing machines were often the main target of the arsonists, thereby effectively predicating the events in East Anglia later in the year.⁶⁰

In early April the *Maidstone Journal* rebutted claims in the national press that outrages 'which had taken place in other counties among unemployed agricultural labourers' had also taken place in Kent and Sussex, something they dismissed as 'an evil report', also

⁵⁸ *Kentish Gazette*, 9, 16 and 23 November, 7, 14 and 21 December; *Brighton Gazette*, 22 November and 27 December 1821, and 24 January 1822; *Maidstone Journal*, 6 November, 11 and 18 December; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 24 December 1821, 21 and 28 January 1822.

⁵⁹ Indictment of George Barnett and George Bulbeck for arson, Sussex Lent Assizes 1822, PRO Assi 94/1854; Indictment of Edward Burgess for malicious damage, Surrey Epiphany Quarter Sessions 1822, SHC QS 2/6; Indictment of William Peskett, Joseph Collick, Samuel Follett, George Roger, William Bignall, Isaac Shepherd, and Henry Barber for the malicious destruction of a dam, West Sussex Epiphany Quarter Sessions 1822, WSCRO QR/W/722 f.75; *Brighton Gazette*, 15 November 1821; *Maidstone Journal*, 1 January and 12 February 1822.

⁶⁰ King J. Gell, Lewes to E. Curteis, 15 May 1822, HO 64/1/ff.205-8; *Kentish Gazette*, 19 and 22 February, 1, 8 and 26 March, and 9 April; *Maidstone Journal*, 26 March; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 1, 8 and 22 April; *Maidstone Gazette*, 2 and 9 April; *Brighton Gazette*, 4 April 1822. A. Peacock, *Bread or Blood: A Study of Agrarian Riots in East Anglia 1816* (London, 1965).

rebutting claims that there were 'movements amongst the troops' at Maidstone Barracks. The country was self-evidently 'never in a more peaceful and tranquil state'. Such claims were manifest nonsense and certainly militated against reports in their previous issue of a serious case of plant maiming at East Malling and the apocryphal news that, as the Stockbury overseer had no work for the nineteen unemployed labourers who had applied for relief, they were set to play marbles from 7am to 6pm, and were strictly superintended 'as if at work'. If this and the recent spate of incendiary fires were not enough to convince the editor, then forthcoming evidence would surely prove him wrong. Of course the setting out of such an explicit position would mean that pride would only be surrendered with a great deal of reluctance, indeed much evidence presumably was later ignored by the paper and as such not reported.⁶¹

Further cases of plant maiming, a brutal case of animal maiming at Lewes, and an assassination attempt on a farmer at Stone-in-Oxney all provided evidence that the editor of the *Maidstone Journal* was at best misguided. The farmers and millers who at Icklesham were subjected to a series of thefts and burglaries were themselves engaged in a plan to force the parson to take the tithes in kind. Certainly the pre-harvest signs did not look promising. A further two cases of arson and another supposedly accidental fire in which a threshing machine was suspiciously destroyed, would, one would think, help focus labourers' attentions on the means necessary to protect their 'right' of harvest work, the wages from which were used by many labourers to pay off accumulated slates with local tradesmen and retailers as well as cottage rents. Therefore the general cuts in harvest wages reported in early July seemed like an open act of provocation. The remuneration for reaping or mowing an acre of wheat including binding the sheaves was to be cut from nine shillings to a meagre seven shillings, and down to a derisory 4/6 for oats and barley. Daily harvest labour was to be paid at the rate of two shillings with board or three shillings without, with a recognition that after the harvest wages would be cut to twenty pence per day.⁶²

The downward pressure on harvest wages and localised unemployment during the harvest period focused plebeian attentions not only the farmers and the vestries but also upon the competition – Irish labourers. By late July the arrival of Irish labourers on the Isle of Thanet provoked the resistance of both local and other migrant labourers who traditionally travelled there to find harvest work. The hop industry around Maidstone traditionally employed many Irish labourers, often engendering disputes. Hop picking did generate an

⁶¹ *Maidstone Journal*, 9 and 16 April; *Kentish Gazette*, 12 and 19 April 1822.

⁶² *Maidstone Gazette*, 14 May and 4 June; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 29 April; *Brighton Gazette*, 16 and 23 May; *Times*, 28 June; *Kentish Gazette*, 5 July 1822. The summer was hot and dry, and harvest whilst early proved good, with fruit particularly plentiful. Lent corn and pulses were much injured by the drought but still produced average yields.

unusually high level of bitter disputes in 1822, but whether these were directly related to the employment of Irish labourers is unclear. William Ledger, a substantial hop farmer at Ulcomb, near Maidstone, was in the unfortunate position of also being a parish officer. In mid-July 400 hills of hops in one of Ledger's plantations were cut during the night. A week later a threatening letter addressed to Ledger was posted onto the local pub door. So serious were the threats that Ledger's sister was said to be, according to the Solicitor at the *Maidstone Gazette* office, in fear of her life. A £10 reward offered by Ledger was added to by a further £40 offered by the Ulcomb vestry, whilst a request was also made to the Home Office for the assistance of an 'intelligent officer' as one man was strongly under suspicion. Elsewhere a Saturday night fire in one of Mr. Ellis' oast houses at Barming, conjectured to be the result of a workman's candle falling amongst the hops, did not prompt the hop pickers to offer their assistance instead: a large crowd gathered, many of whom were Irish, and simply watched the flames. Ellis also lost another oast house at nearby Watlingbury, though the cause of the fire was not stated. At Hawkhurst, deep in the Kentish Weald, some gypsies, who had been involved in a 'disagreement' over hop-picking, compelled a child to set fire to some straw on Mr. Winch's farm. The fire consumed a barn, straw and most of the new harvest's corn.⁶³

The Hawkhurst fire was not unique; 1822 was plagued by a record number of harvest-time incendiary fires, an important fact considering that the harvest period in the years between 1790 and 1821 had represented the period of the year least blighted by incendiary fires. New wheat stacks were set on fire in broad daylight at Tonbridge, an Eastry seed windmill and adjoining storehouse were destroyed, and a trefoil stack at Westwell was similarly turned to ashes. Other fires reported in the provincial press may well have also been deliberate, for instance a thirty-ton hay-stack was discovered to be on fire on Thomas Page's Pluckley farm at 8am, not a time at which hay-stacks, due to low day break temperatures, tended to burst into flames from overheating. Similar problems are encountered with oast house fires; because such fires were common in September and October, cases that were malicious may often have automatically been labelled accidents.⁶⁴

Despite the growing discontent of the labouring poor, local authorities responded not by more generous relief schedules but through the adoption of ever-tighter codes. Other than for isolated acts of philanthropy, (for instance Lord Pelham presented Battle parish 250 acres

⁶³ *Kentish Gazette*, 26 July and 13 September; Solicitor to the *Maidstone Gazette*, to Peel, 23 July, PRO HO 52/3; *Maidstone Gazette*, 23 July; *Maidstone Journal*, 30 July and 17 September; *Sussex Advertiser*, 7 October 1822.

⁶⁴ For all incendiary fires between 1790 and 1822 see Appendix 2.3. *Maidstone Journal*, 20 August; *Kentish Gazette*, 13 September, 8 and 15 October; *Maidstone Gazette*, 20 August and 17 September 1822.

to be cultivated by the poor, and assisted emigration schemes) the outlook for the rural poor during the winter of 1822-3 looked exceptionally bleak. It should not have been surprising therefore that poor relief was the key theatre for working-class resistance that winter, with both recorded cases of arson in late 1822 against Wealden parochial authorities: at Northiam, three days after a serious riot at a Select Vestry meeting, which ended with three young men indicted at the Winter Assizes, Rev. Lord had his hay-stacks set on fire; whilst at nearby Burwash the 'domineering' overseer Flurry had his barns fired.⁶⁵

Other means of seeking revenge, or redress, were also adopted. In late October a body of labourers from Woodchurch, near Tenterden, made an incredible journey to the Union Hall Police Office in London to complain about the 'manner in which they were set to work [by the parish officers], and their pay and allowances', only to be informed that such a complaint must be addressed to the magistrates in their neighbourhood. Therefore on 7 November 70 Woodchurch labourers travelled to Cranbrook to make their complaints to the monthly meeting of the divisional Petty Sessions. Again they were dismissed on the grounds the numerous small farmers in Woodchurch were labouring under 'difficulties to which *your* situation is not exposed' but that *they* rarely appeared before the Bench, except for the occasional non-payment of poor rates.⁶⁶

The judgement was at least partly understandable. Whilst most landlords did make limited rent reductions, the clergy were far more reluctant to cut their tithes – at Crawley tithe holders seized upon rent reductions to actually demand *higher* tithes, thereby doing little to help find tenants for the many empty farms. Moreover tithe reductions often had distinct local geographies, with clergymen holding more than one living tending to cut their tithes more deeply, or exclusively, in the parish where they were resident. For instance Rev. Moore cut the East Peckham tithes by 5% but by 25% at his resident parish of Wrotham. Elsewhere Rev. Beaver's attempt to get away with same ruse lead to him receiving 'many insults' and then, in early March 1823, narrowly escaping death when someone fired a two barrelled gun into his Barcombe rectory by riding into the yard on a horse, with another person letting out a horrid yell. Beaver believed the culprits were four 'men' from Ringmer. This dynamic also created a vicious circle in that the fewer farmers there were the higher poor rates were for those left, thereby forcing others out of business and doing nothing to attract new tenants.

⁶⁵ *Brighton Gazette*, 15 August; Heathfield Vestry Minute, 29 September, Newick Vestry Minute, 22 December 1822, Ewhurst Vestry Minute, 24 January 1823, ESCRO PAR372/12/1, 428/12/1, and 324/12/1; Easebourne Vestry Minute, 28 October; WSCRO PAR75/12/2. *Sussex Advertiser*, 11, 18 and 25 November, December 23 and 30; Indictments of John Carter, David Saunter, and William Saunter for riotous assembly, Charles Weston and George Eastwood for arson, 'Complaint' against John Morgan for spreading fire, Sussex Winter Assizes 1822, PRO Assi 94/1856.

⁶⁶ *Maidstone Journal*, 12 November 1822.

Farm losses were most acute amongst hop growers, one Wealden farmer of 250 acres making a loss of £4,000 for the 1821 harvest year and expecting to lose more for 1822.⁶⁷

Compared to the immediate post-harvest period the first few months of 1823 were relatively serene, apart from in hop communities where the depression was deepest, and was manifested in petitions to parliament 'praying for relief' from the hop duty and in acts of strength and defiance amongst labourers. The young men at Brenchley in the Kentish Weald, throughout January spent their Saturday nights going about the parish menacingly firing sky rockets, one of which set fire to the thatch of the Rose and Crown Inn, which was luckily soon extinguished. Farmer Colebrook at Benenden was not so lucky, his barn was destroyed by an incendiary.⁶⁸ Incendiarism in the spring and summer was equally infrequent, the only two cases occurring on the edges of Chichester and East Grinstead. Hop parishes, however, suffered from repeated cases of plant maiming, losing thousands of hop vines in the process. Even the intervention of Prosecution Societies (at Goudhurst) and Assize indictments (Plumstead) were unsuccessful in stopping such depredations.⁶⁹

The harvest of 1823 was actually substantially worse than *that of the previous year*. Whereas in the Brighton area the harvest was almost completed by early September, the '40 days of rain' from the end of June meant that such crops were both deficient and often wet when made into ricks. The weather also meant that the hops were very light, and as such required little labour.⁷⁰ Despite this the level of post-harvest protest was not tangibly more intense than for 1822. Of the five cases of arson I have detected from early September to the end of 1823, only two were against agricultural property, the others cases involving 'domestic' and industrial disputes.⁷¹ Cases of both actual and attempted animal maiming were just as frequently deployed, although in one case at Ewell in Surrey the motive whilst

⁶⁷ *Kentish Gazette*, 24 September, 1, 5 and 26 November, 6 and 10 December 1822, 24 January 1823; *Times*, 4 October; *Maidstone Journal*, 8 and 29 October, 12 November, and 24 December 1822, 28 January; *Sussex Advertiser*, 10 March 1823.

⁶⁸ *Maidstone Journal*, 28 January and 18 February; *Sussex Advertiser*, 10 March 1823.

⁶⁹ *Brighton Gazette*, 1 May; *Sussex Advertiser*, 12 May. Minute of the Goudhurst Prosecuting Society, 19 November, CKS U769 L6; Indictment of John Brode for maliciously cutting hops, Kent Summer Assizes 1823, PRO Assi 94/1873.

⁷⁰ *Brighton Gazette*, 4 September and 2 October 1823; Jones, *Seasons and Prices*, pp.162-3.

⁷¹ *Maidstone Journal*, 30 September and 11 November; *The Times*, 8 October; *Sussex Advertiser*, 24 November; *Brighton Gazette*, 27 November; Indictment of John Swaffield, labourer, Surrey Winter Assizes 1823, PRO Assi 94/1877. A case of arson at Brighton in late November was against a master builder. In March the journeymen bricklayers and masons had struck for higher wages. Clearly the depression impacted upon wages in all labouring and skilled sectors, even though coastal towns such as Hastings and Brighton were rapidly expanding in a literal sense, thus providing a huge deal of employment for skilled workers in the construction trade: *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 24 March. A harvest dispute at Aldingbourne also provoked a labourer to let several cows and horses into a field of yet-to-be-harvested oats: *Sussex and Surrey Chronicle*, 24 September 1823.

malicious was not clearly targeted at anyone other than the 25 unlucky sheep that had wool stuffed down their throats by a young shepherds' assistant.⁷²

Such evidence though may be slightly misleading; rather than resorting to acts of protest the continued response to mass unemployment and depressed wages was to steal, not least from farmers who appeared to be exploiting the depression to keep labouring wages artificially low. Poaching, especially by organised gangs from nearby towns or the Metropolis, was said to be on an unprecedented scale, the neighbourhood of Chatham was subjected to cases of sheep stealing on an almost daily basis, and the farmers barns and houses in the Sussex parishes of Icklesham and Udimore were systematically targeted by thieves.⁷³ Such feelings were only reinforced by the rise in the price of wheat between late 1823 and early 1824. At Canterbury wheat that was selling at 34/- a quarter in 1823 had by early February risen to 80/- a quarter. The effects of such dramatic inflation were partly mitigated by limited increases in parochial wages and relief, just as common though were attempts to keep poor rates down by giving relief in the form of bread or flour, thus robbing the poor of choice and an important socially fulfilling role in market relations, or the establishment of Select Vestries or the employment of Assistant Overseers to scrutinize claims for relief in minute detail. John Ades, the hated assistant overseer at Brede, had a lamb stolen by two young labourers. The two men were sentenced to death, later to be reprieved to one year in gaol, hardly enhancing Ade's reputation amongst the poor. More explicit evidence of the hostility of the rural poor to assistant overseers came in the form of the attempted assassination of John Wilson, the assistant overseer at Staplehurst. Wilson, who had been attending a vestry meeting, left Staplehurst to travel to Cranbrook on parish business. On his departing from Cranbrook, between 1 and 2am, three men fired rockets at him, which despite missing him startled his horse, which reared and threw Wilson to the ground, severely injuring him. The use of rockets suggests the antagonists were smugglers, as smuggling gangs used rockets to signal the landing of a cargo. More compelling still was the letter posted on the Mayfield vestry door in early January 1825 which warned overseer Day that 'Wee do Intend Washing Our Hands inn Your Blood'.⁷⁴

1824 however proved to be a fairly quiet year, and despite the continued high level of under and unemployment there was little resort to explicit acts of protest. Other than the attack on John Wilson the most significant acts were the malicious destruction of a plough at

⁷² *Maidstone Journal*, 28 October; *Sussex Advertiser*, 3 November; *Sussex and Surrey Chronicle*, 24 September; Indictment of William Rhodes, Surrey Michaelmas Quarter Sessions 1823, SHC QS 2/6.

⁷³ *Times*, 2 January; *Sussex Advertiser*, 2 and 16 February 1824.

⁷⁴ *Maidstone Journal*, 10 February; Indictment of Richard Eldridge and James Larkin for sheep stealing, Sussex Summer Assizes, PRO Assi 94/1906; *Sussex Advertiser*, 23 August 1824, and 10 January; *Kent Herald*, 11 November 1825.

Chilham and malicious hop cutting at Mereworth,⁷⁵ though south-eastern market towns did suffer from arson, plant maiming, and mass campaigns of malicious damage.⁷⁶ The wet summer and autumn lead to a general failure in the apple crop and widespread foot rot in sheep, the hop harvest was also slightly deficient, something which did nothing to ease the now traditional rows between indigenous labourers and their Irish counterparts. The neighbourhood of Wateringbury, 'infested' with men, women and children from Ireland, witnessed nightly squabbles which one night turned into a full-blown riot; the Irish contingent taking possession of a turnpike keepers' house at Barming, only by resorting to considerable force were they ejected. In the ensuing brawl one man had his eye taken out with a reaping hook.⁷⁷

After a deficient harvest in 1824 grain prices drifted higher, to the point at which under the Corn Laws the ports were actually open to import barley. Plebeian responses during the winter of 1824-5, other than the aforementioned threatening letter and several incendiary fires, were a general resort to poaching and pilfering. In late February work in Maidstone ground to a halt as a strike amongst certain trades developed into a general strike with journeyman mechanics, carpenters and plumbers, bricklayers, sawyers and paper-makers all demanding higher wages. The *Kent Herald* even supported the strike claiming that it was 'only fair' to increase pay in order to meet the rising price of the 'necessities of life'. By the beginning of March carpenters, plumbers and paper-makers had all had gained considerable concessions. The Maidstone example was followed at Lewes where journeymen bricklayers successfully struck for higher wages. Many of the clergy also wanted a share of farmers' increased incomes and were quick to demand higher tithes; at Guildford cuts made two years earlier after 'requests' from 'landholders' were almost totally reversed. At Canterbury an extraordinary general meeting of the Guardians was called after the clergy claimed they could not afford to pay their poor rates as many farmers were refusing to pay their tithes; clearly the clergy were no longer prepared to be sympathetic to still cash-strapped farmers as prices of agricultural commodities were rising.⁷⁸

Both the hay and grain harvests in 1825 proved to be plentiful, if very early. Despite this, by late October prices were still rising, though of the thirteen-recorded cases of arson in 1825 nine occurred during the harvest with only one occurring in the proceeding months. The

⁷⁵ *Kentish Gazette*, 5 March; *Maidstone Journal*, 20 July 1824.

⁷⁶ Indictment of Andrew Leslie for arson (Bermondsey), Surrey Summer Assizes, PRO Assi 94/1903; *Kentish Gazette*, 27 February, 5 March, 16 April, and 25 June; *Sussex Advertiser*, 14 June; *Brighton Gazette*, 5 August; *Kent Herald*, 9 December 1824.

⁷⁷ *Brighton Gazette*, 28 October, and 2 December; *Times*, 10 September 1824.

⁷⁸ *Kent Herald*, 13 January, 3 February, and 3 March; *Brighton Gazette*, 13 January; *Kentish Gazette*, 14 January; *County Chronicle*, 15 February and 29 March; *Sussex Advertiser*, 14 March; *Maidstone Journal*, 10 May 1825.

exact reason for this seemingly unseasonable concentration will forever remain obscure but certain factors are worth considering. The harvest problems encountered in 1824 were still fresh in labouring minds. Three of the fires targeted premises with machinery, one a threshing machine, however one of the nine fires was motivated by a popular belief that the farmer had taken the farm 'over another mans head'. Irish labourers, already the subject of attacks in London, were present in the south-east in record numbers, so much so that East Kent was said to be 'swarming with Irishmen with wives and children in search of harvest work', thereby depressing the earning potential of indigenous labourers and inevitably generating resentment. Despite the good harvest, from October prices again started to rise, adding to the slight improvement in farmers' fortunes started in 1824, however a crisis in the London markets in December panicked numerous provincial banks throughout the south-east into suspending operations. By the end of the following February payments were still suspended by many banks thereby generating massive cash-flow problems for even the biggest farmers.⁷⁹

1826 saw a marked decline in incendiarism, with six cases compared to the twelve cases in 1825: moreover only three were against agrarian targets. However, before the (good) harvest tensions over employment and prices did erupt into acts of protest, with three sectors particular targets. The scarcity and high price of fodder meant that not only were many animals sent to market, depressing livestock prices to a third below 1824 levels, but also that milk production was low and as such prices were high. The effects of these trends were two-fold. Smaller herds and flocks required fewer labourers, not least during calving and lambing, and lower prices meant labour could less easily be afforded. High milk prices meant that the price of cheese and butter also rose. When the new Butter Market opened in Maidstone in mid March during such high prices it was, perhaps unsurprisingly, subjected to a malicious attack; the iron gates were considerably damaged and the walls of the new Mitre were disfigured.⁸⁰ The summer drought meant that hop growth was backward and therefore demand for labour in the hop fields was lower than normal levels for the time of year; hop cutters targeted plantations at Maidstone, at nearby Loose, at Cranbrook, and at Littlebourne, near Canterbury. Proprietors of paper mills were for the second year in a row 'victims' of protest, not this time from strikes but from numerous menacing letters written in red ink,

⁷⁹ For details of individual incendiary fires other than those listed see Appendix 2.3. *Brighton Gazette*, 16 June, 4 August, 20 October 1825, 23 February 1826; *Kent Herald*, 21 and 28 July; Indictment of Louisa Catherine Jeffereys and Louisa Billington on two counts of arson (Bermondsey manufactory), Surrey Summer Assizes, PRO Assi 94/1927; *Sussex Advertiser*, 1 August; *County Chronicle*, 9 August and 20 December 1825. Bank failures since the end of the Napoleonic Wars had been a major problem to agriculturalists: see G. Mingay, 'Agriculture', in A. Armstrong (ed.), *The Economy of Kent, 1640-1914* (Woodbridge, 1995), p.72.

threatening to destroy the machinery of their mills if they persisted in using it to manufacture paper. Between late July and the end of September another attack on Irish labourers engaged in the hop harvest occurred at Barming, and in the hop parish of Boughton Monchelsea a farmers horse was forced over the edge of a quarry.⁸¹ Of the arson attacks, two were against prominent members of the Kentish gentry. A clear class-ist motivation was also discernible in early November when a number of pleasure boats at Hastings were maliciously damaged. Incendiary fires at Mereworth and Westerham were later followed by a resort to plant maiming and animal maiming, respectively. More worryingly though at Southover, essentially a semi-rural suburb of Lewes, typhus – a sign of malnutrition and overcrowding – broke out amongst the poor inhabitants. If the agricultural depression had lifted slightly, most of the poor were yet to benefit.⁸²

The winter of 1826-7 proved to be exceptionally severe, after the drought hay remained scarce and expensive, some farmers were even reduced to feeding their stock straw. A wet spring caused heavy losses during lambing, but the weather improved and produced a good harvest, despite some unseasonable hail and rain showers in late August.⁸³ Of the eight cases of arson in 1827 six occurred before the harvest. The most costly attack destroyed the extensive saw-mills on the Surrey side of the Thames: the fire followed a long series of complaints by sawyers thrown out of employment.⁸⁴ Pre-harvest arson attacks were complimented by considerable resort to other covert protest forms. An Eastbourne farmer received an incendiary letter, as did a Thurnham farmer, however this was an attempt to extort money by threatening damage – a discernible trend in the 1820s. Animal maimers struck at Lewes and Dover, where another butcher was the target. Fruit tress were maliciously attacked at Mereworth (as mentioned above), two young labourers were found guilty at the Kent Assizes of destroying the 69 apple and 16 pear trees and were sentenced to life transportation, whereas the culprit at East Molesey was sentenced at Quarter Sessions to a year's hard labour for destroying numerous cherry, apple and pear trees. Amongst various cases of malicious damage, the destruction of an unpopular sluice erected on the Romney Marsh and a farmers pair of oak swing gates at Seasalter, near Whitstable, are particularly

⁸⁰ See Appendix 2.3. Jones, *Seasons and Prices*, report for 1826; *Maidstone Journal*, 21 March; *Kent Herald*, 22 June; *Brighton Gazette*, 18 May 1826.

⁸¹ Indictment of Thomas Fulker for cutting hop bines, Kent Winter Assizes 1826; *Kent Herald*, 18 and 25 May, 6 and 27 July, and 15 September; *Kentish Gazette*, 2 and 15 September 1826.

⁸² *Kent Herald*, 26 September and 2 November; *Kentish Gazette*, 7 November 1826; Indictment of Edward Smith and John Large for maliciously cutting fruit trees, Kent Lent Assizes 1827, PRO Assi 94/1985; C. Thompson, Coombe Bank to William Manning, Westerham, 3 December, PRO HO 64/1, ff.67-9; *Brighton Gazette*, 5 October 1826.

⁸³ Jones, *Seasons and Prices*, report for 1827; *Brighton Gazette*, 29 March, 12 April and 23 August 1827.

striking. Most dramatic, however, was the attempted assassination of the Chartham overseer on his return from Canterbury: luckily he escaped only with a shot to his arm. A father and son, 'men of lose and daring character', who had previously quarrelled with the overseer were immediately suspected and a £150 reward was offered for information leading to their conviction. Bishop, a Bow Street officer sent to assist the Canterbury magistrates, found a gun concealed in the suspects' house, which on inspection the overseer identified. The two men had shortened the barrel before the shooting and then afterwards took it to a gunsmith to restore it to its original length so as not to be recognisable. On this evidence both men were apprehended and committed to custody in St. Augustine's House of Correction, Canterbury. The case ended tragically when the father whilst in custody hung himself in the cell. As no decisive evidence could be found against the son he was discharged.⁸⁵

The relatively quiet post-harvest period of 1827 carried through until the harvest of 1828. Despite an increasing tendency towards cutting the manes and tails off horses and cows, a practice the *Maidstone Journal* described as 'now very prevalent in the Weald', and numerous confrontations between poachers and game-keepers, the first four months of 1828 only witnessed one case of arson at Tunbridge Wells.⁸⁶ The protest trajectory of Tunbridge Wells and its vicinity proved to be very different in 1828 than for the rest of the south-east: as well as the incendiary fire, it was afflicted by numerous cases of malicious damage and plant maiming, as well as the maiming of three cows.⁸⁷ If an unprecedented resort to parochially financed emigration eased the problem of unemployment in some localities, it was more than counterbalanced by the influx of Irish labourers: by the middle of May a large group were already at Chichester, signalling a siege upon labourers' incomes during the hay-harvest as well as the grain harvest. That attacks on vestries and overseers were prevalent in 1828 suggests that emigration and other schemes did very little, if anything at all, to placate the poor.⁸⁸ The harvest, though, proved a turning point and helped germinate the seeds of

⁸⁴ For details of individual incendiary fires see Appendix 2.3. *Kent Herald*, 15 March; *County Chronicle*, 22 May 1827.

⁸⁵ *Sussex Advertiser*, 5 February (animal maiming), 5 March (threatening letter) and 23 July (plant maiming); *Maidstone Journal*, 24 April (threatening letter) and 31 July (plant maiming); *Kent Herald*, 10 (animal maiming) and 17 May (attempted assassination), and 2 August (malicious damage); *Kentish Gazette*, 27 July (destruction of sluice); Indictment of Thomas Somersby for malicious damage to fruit trees (East Molesey), Surrey Adjourned Midsummer Quarter Sessions 1827, QS/2/7/1827.

⁸⁶ For the cutting of tails and manes see: *Kentish Gazette*, 18 December 1827 and 8 February; *Maidstone Journal*, 26 February and 23 June. *Brighton Gazette*, 3 January (poaching) and 3 April (arson) 1828,

⁸⁷ *Maidstone Journal*, 1 March (malicious damage); *Brighton Gazette*, 13 March (same), 15 May (plant maiming), and 19 June (malicious damage); *Brighton Guardian*, 11 September 1828 (animal maiming).

⁸⁸ For emigration see: *Maidstone Journal*, 22 April; *Kent Herald*, 1 May; and, *Kentish Gazette*, 23 May. For Irish labourers see, *Brighton Gazette*, 15 May. The influx of Irish labourers in 1827 prompted the *County Chronicle* (4 March 1828) to suggest the 'problem' needed to be legislated against. Indictments against George Elphick, Francis Foord, Leonard Pearson and Levy Pearson for

'Swing' planted forty-years previously. Floods in January had washed away much of the winter wheat and ruined most of the rest. The wet conditions continued until the summer, and if the wheat was badly retarded in May, then thunderstorms in June and July ruined what was left, as well as damaging and impeding the hay harvest. Continual rain throughout August could do little more damage but did ruin what had previously looked a promising crop of hops:⁸⁹ that six of the seven-recorded cases of arson for 1828 occurred after the harvest is not that surprising; that one of the fires at Bromley targeted a threshing machine is even less so.⁹⁰

combination and assault (Westham), East Sussex Midsummer Quarter Sessions 1828, Indictment against Jesse Gorringe and George Sayers for assault (Hurstpierpoint), East Sussex Epiphany Quarter Sessions 1829, ESCRO QR/E/796 and 798.

⁸⁹ *County Chronicle*, 1 January and 16 September; *Brighton Gazette*, 22 May, 12 June, 16 and 21 July, and 14 August; *Kent Herald*, 18 September 1828.

⁹⁰ *Kentish Gazette*, 14 October 1828. Otherwise, for details of incendiary fires see Appendix 2.3.

Chapter 8: 'Starving and firing shall go together'¹: Still Swinging? 1831-1833

On the morning of Sunday 14 November 1830 Mr. Franks' Albury mill was set on fire, the incendiary also firing several shots through his bedroom window. The son of the Attorney General, in informing his father of the events in the West Surrey district, was not surprised as Franks in his late capacity as Albury overseer had become 'odious to the people'.² Fears were also raised that all machinery in the vicinity was at risk, for, according to Drummond, Irish paper-makers on the tramp through Kent and Sussex were in the area and were 'sworn foes to Machinery of all kinds'.³ James Warner, a 30 year-old labourer, was committed on 19 November to stand trial at the Surrey Assizes, and despite a belief that others were also involved, whom Warner through solidarity would not implicate, he was found guilty and sentenced to be hung. The conviction immediately provoked 'a strong sensation' in the locality, not least because Warner was the leader of a gang of 'poachers + depredators on every specie of Property in the adjoining parishes of Albury + Shere'. The immensity of the sentence needed to be pressed home locally, with calls for the execution to take place on Shere Heath or wherever else convenient close to the scene of the crime.⁴

Not only was the place of execution a source of contention, so too was the sentence. On 6 January 1831 shots were fired through the bedroom windows of the Master of Albury workhouse night and a threatening letter was affixed to a post near Drummond's residence, Albury Park. Reports of the letter vary as to its exact wording: 'We fired the mill; starving and firing shall go together' reported the *Kentish Gazette*, whereas the *County Chronicle* (four days later) claimed it read "It was *me* who fired the Mill - starve and fire go together'. Another threatening letter, found near the Guildford workhouse, also questioned the sentence: 'If Wrner is mured Franks Dromans (Drummond) an Smallpiece [a 'witness'] shal dye i culd clear im althethear you fals swaring villing'.⁵ This series of incidents

¹ Quote from *Kentish Gazette*, 14 January 1831.

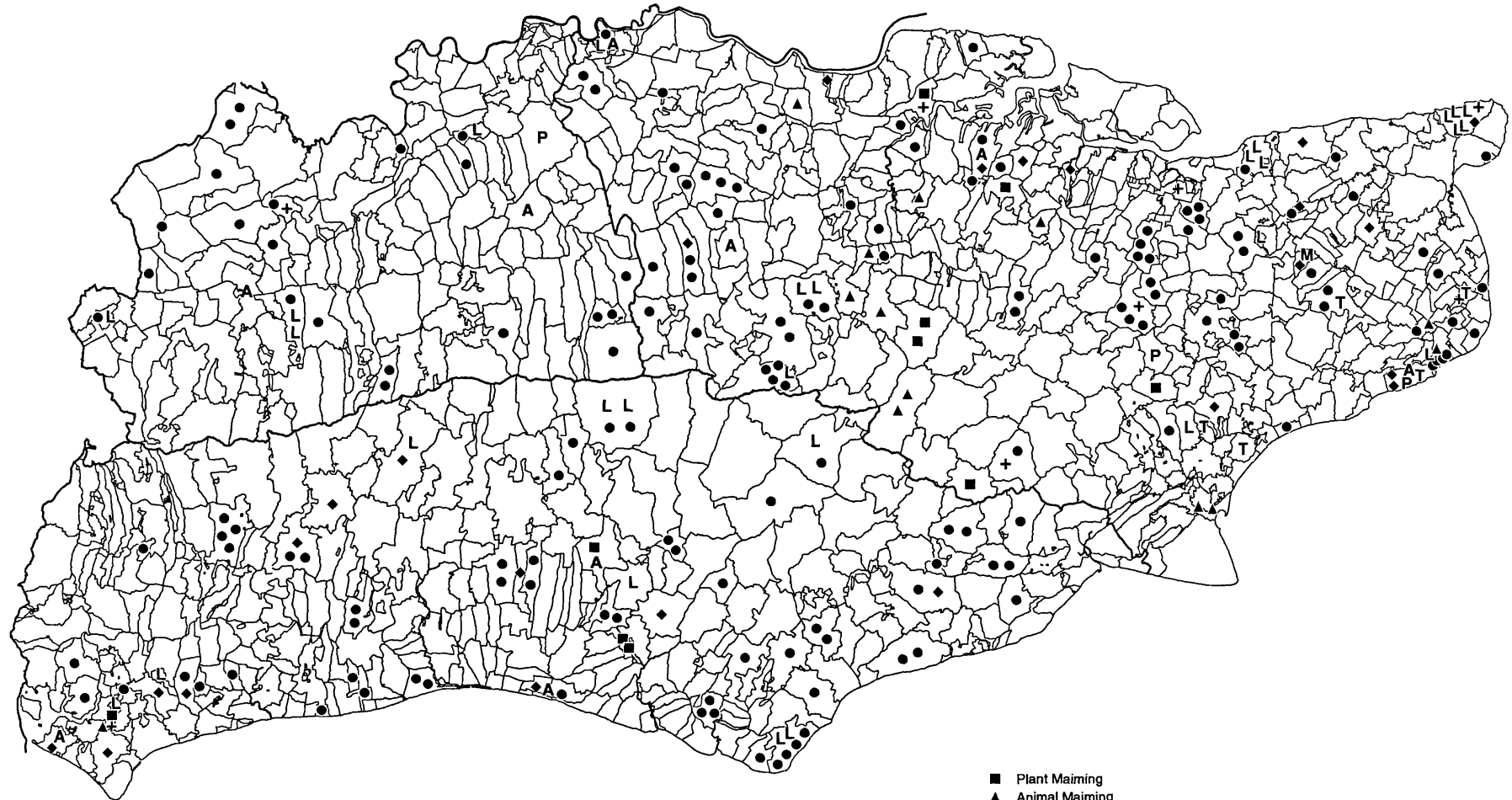
² *Times*, 16 November; Attorney General, Court of King's Bench to Peel, 15 November, enclosing a letter from his son, 14 November 1830, PRO HO 52/10, ff. 194-6.

³ Henry Drummond, Albury Park to Peel, 17 November 1830, enclosing depositions (missing), PRO HO 52/10, ff. 199-200. Drummond also reported that two men had been seen that morning 'looking into [Franks'] the cowyard from a hill'.

⁴ Indictment of James Warner, and Assize Calendar, Surrey Winter Assizes, PRO ASSI 94/2070; G. Holme-Summers, Hatchlands, Guildford to Melbourne, 4 January 1831, enclosing letter from G.W. Onslow, Guildford, n.d. (late Dec 1830 or early Jan 1831), PRO HO 52/12, ff. 367-9.

⁵ George Walton Onslow, Chairman of the Guildford Bench to Melbourne, 8 January, PRO HO 52/12, ff. 363-4; *Kentish Gazette*, 14 January; *County Chronicle*, 18 January; The *Kentish Gazette* (14 January 1831) gave a slightly different version: 'Warren is murdered; Franks, Drummond and Smallpiece shall die; I could clear him at the place, you false swearing villains!'

Map 3.1: Popular Protests, 1831-1833



plus, (all 1831) numerous threatening letters sent to individuals in parishes around the Swale (Kent); and, mobile gangs visited unspecified parishes between the Medway and the Isle of Grain; and, one case of animal maiming in an undisclosed Surrey parish; and, one case of arson between Faversham and Charing

- Plant Maiming
- ▲ Animal Maiming
- + Malicious Damage
- Arson
- L Threatening Letter/Notice/Graffiti/Other
- ◆ Collective Action
- A Attack/Assault/Assassination
- M Machine Breaking (excluding threshing machines)
- T Threshing machine broken
- P Political Demonstration/Rally/Lecture
- * multiple cases (exact number unknown)

prompted a local gentleman to claim that the need for a local execution was even more pressing. Regardless, on 10 January 1831 Warner flew into eternity.⁶

Evidence of popular reactions to Assizes sentencing elsewhere is not quite so clear. From late December 1830 to mid January 1831, the immediate aftermath of the Assizes, incendiarism was almost solely confined to Sussex and Kentish London.⁷ An arson attack on Lewisham Church was followed by a letter sent to Mr. Wheatley, the Greenwich overseer threatening that a body of men were coming from 'Barkshire' to destroy his machines and stables, and that the writer was personally going to 'set fire to all the straw in your loft and poison your horses'. The letter was embellished with an illustration of a knife juxtaposed against a heart. Despite including the promise of a further two letters 'before action', the same night the theatre next door to Wheatley's omnibus depot (a hotbed of mechanic innovation) was set alight, the flames soon engulfing the supposed target.⁸ Initially in East Kent plebeian reactions to the sentencing seemed to be manifest in a resort to alternative means of 'peaceful' protest; a group of between '14 and 18 Herne paupers' marched to Canterbury to lodge a complaint with the Magistrates against Mr. Thorpe, the assistant overseer. However, on being ordered to pay the men 13/6 a week, the officers refused, claiming that the parish could not afford such a sum; the Bench retorted that whether the parish could afford the payment was not important, it was the responsibility of the Vestry to find the money.⁹ Magistrates were the labourers' friends: if called upon they would right any injustice. Paternalism was thus again invoked to prevent a re-stoking of Swing.

In the last fortnight of January the vicinity of Dover was plagued by three incendiary fires, one of which destroyed the produce of the Northbourne tithes purchased only days before.¹⁰ Moreover, that farmers, despite Swing, continued to use threshing machines, or at least not put beyond use, generated considerable resentment. A Whitstable farmer received three letters threatening to set fire to his premises unless he 'brought forward' his machine. At 2am on 17 January the threat was carried out, despite the machine having been 'put down', the fire tragically killing four people. Three days later a Donnington (near Chichester) farmer had a Swing letter, wrapped in a bill entitled 'Starvation of the Poor', thrown into his farm-

⁶ G. Holme-Summers to Melbourne, 7 January, PRO HO 52/12, ff.370-1; *County Chronicle*, 18 January 1831.

⁷ 27 December 1830: Funtington (*Hampshire Telegraph*, 2 January) and Cootham, nr. Storrington (*Maidstone Journal*, 4 January); 2 January 1831, Eastbourne (*Sussex Advertiser*, 10 January); 5 January 1831: West Lavington (*Hampshire Telegraph*, 10 January 1831).

⁸ *Kentish Gazette*, 4 and 14 January; *Kent Herald*, 13 January 1831.

⁹ *Kent and Essex Mercury*, 4 January 1831.

¹⁰ 1st fire: 14 January, Priory Farm, Dover (Mr. Norwood, Dover Post Office to Sir Francis Freeling, 14 January, PRO HO 52/13, f.10; *Kentish Gazette*, 18 January: pipes on two of the attendant engines were cut). 2nd fire: 26 January, Black Horse pub, Dover (*Rochester Gazette*, 1 February). 3rd fire: Ashley, Northbourne (*Kentish Gazette*, 1 February; Indictment of William Fagg, 26, and Calendar, Kent Easter Assizes 1831, PRO ASSI 94/2096).

yard, warning him not to use his threshing machine again.¹¹ The intensity and spatial evenness of protests in late January and February put pay to beliefs that Swing had ended. As Roger Wells has correctly asserted, Hobsbawm and Rudé's figures of 5 incendiary fires in Kent and one in Sussex for the whole of 1831 are 'hopelessly defective'.¹² Wells, however, unable to resist the urge to quantify the available evidence despite his earlier warnings against such empiricism, one of which occurred printed a mere nine pages previously, offered his own figures, nineteen for Sussex and twenty for Kent. These figures are also, perhaps unsurprisingly, defective, my totals listing 39 fires for Kent and 33 for Sussex, with fourteen occurring in Surrey. Even these totals are conservative, the Director of the County Fire Office informing Melbourne in late 1831 that

We have endeavoured to discourage the frequent mention of these Acts in the Newspapers, thinking that such descriptions might set others on to produce similar devastation.¹³

Other fires were almost certainly foiled: the discovery of an incendiary ball (a mixture of chemical compounds which ignite on impact) at Eastbourne followed two incendiary fires in as many months and was probably intended to start the third.¹⁴

Incendiarism was not the only tactic adopted in early 1831, a petition from the plebeian population of Bilsington (Romney Marsh) calling for a ban against threshing machines being particularly novel.¹⁵ Attempts by farmers and vestries alike to reduce wages at the termination of the Assizes provoked covert protests,¹⁶ exemplified by a threatening letter sent to a Morden farmer: 'Sir I will burn your place down to the Gound if you don't rise

¹¹ *Times*, 19 January; *Sussex Advertiser*, 31 January; *Rochester Gazette*, 1 February 1831.

¹² Wells, 'Social Protest', p.168; Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, pp.353-8; see Appendix 3.1.

¹³ Wells, 'Social Protest', pp.159 and 168; R. Wells, 'Counting Riots in Eighteenth-Century England' *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, 37 (1978); Wells, 'Resistance to the New Poor Law in the Rural South', in J. Rule and R. Wells, *Crime, Protest and Popular Politics in Southern England, 1740-1850* (London, 1997), p.106: this essay was first published in 1985 as 'Resistance to the New Poor Law in the Rural South', in M. Chase (ed.) *The New Poor Law* (Leeds, 1985). See Appendix 3.1 Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p.358. C. Griffin, 'No Latent Sparks of Mischief'; B. Beaumont, County Fire Office, to Melbourne, 15 December 1831, PRO HO 40/29, ff.533-4, cf. Wells, 'Social Protest', p.159.

¹⁴ *Brighton Gazette*, 3 March. For the two earlier fires see: *Brighton Gazette*, 13 January, and *Sussex Advertiser*, 14 February 1831. Such was the cost of the chemicals mixed in the compound that even for the most successful artisan it would be surprising if such expense would be squandered. The report gives little context but it seems likely that the ball was found lodged in a stack of in a farm-yard but had failed to ignite.

¹⁵ *Kentish Gazette*, 1 March 1831.

¹⁶ Wage cuts at Inglesham (Berkshire) were deemed worthy of comment by the *County Chronicle* (4 January). The lowering of wages by several Sussex parishes prompted the attention of Sir Charles Blunt, and was in his capacity as a magistrates brought to the attention of the Quarter Sessions; and at Billingshurst in West Sussex farmers combined to force wages for married labourers down to 10/- a week and a mere 6/- for unmarried labourers. See *Maidstone Journal*, 18 January, and *Kentish Gazette*, 1 February 1831.

the men money and let the men keep a pig and do away with your hay devil'.¹⁷ In late March the parishes in the vicinity of Battle were 'afflicted' by a popular campaign to increase wages, whereby delegates from several parishes communicated in a sustained attempt to 'determine upon a compulsory increase of wage'. This scheme was immediately followed by attempts at Dorking and Horsham to 'create tumult like on 10 Nov last year'; handbills were posted in the towns and the countryside to call for a mass assemblage on 13 April to coincide with the magistrates' examination of the previous year's poor accounts. Pressure in the vicinity of Dorking was maintained at least until the end of April, when labourers at Ockley were said to have a disposition to strike for higher wages, two incendiary fires on the same day evidence that their 'plan of operations' had begun.¹⁸

Throughout the spring and early summer incendiary fires continued to terrorise farmers throughout the south-east, including two cases within a week at the Swing epicentre Brede, and three within five days in the vicinity of Keymer.¹⁹ The lowering of agricultural wages inevitably provoked hostile reactions, not least in Dover where Swing was again graffitied on 'most' walls and buildings, apparently in the same handwriting as in 1830. Lord Lieutenant Camden warned Melbourne that in East Kent there were 'alarming symptoms of an evil aspect': even the labourers at Rainham where no man was unemployed and wages were between 2/3 and 3/- a day were not beyond resorting to incendiarism.²⁰ The tactics adopted by the Kent labourers became less subtle as the hay harvest progressed; around Rochester labourers were to be heard 'complaining' about low wages, at Aldington agricultural labourers were holding nightly meetings to discuss what action they should take, and in the vicinities of Sittingbourne and Faversham open threats were made that 'burnings and nocturnal depredations' would be revived, starting first with 'the corn in hand, [then] they will then turn their attention, when ripe enough, to the standing corn'.²¹ That the number of Irish migrant workers in the Kentish cornlands again reached record levels, despite their hostile, and violent, treatment the previous year, added further incentive for farmers to deflate harvest wages and thus for the indigenous poor to renew their acts of overt protest.²²

¹⁷ Indictment of John Longhurst, labourer, and Calendar, Surrey Lent Assizes 1831, PRO ASSI 94/2100. Longhurst was found guilty and sentenced to seven years transportation.

¹⁸ Sir Godfrey Webster, Battle Abbey to Melbourne, 28 March; D. Stedman, Horsham to Melbourne, 8 April, PRO HO 52/15, ff. 6-8 and 15. Letter to 'My Dear John', 21 April 1831, ESCRO HIC 980.

¹⁹ See Appendix 3.1. For Brede fires see: *Hastings & Cinque Ports Iris*, 21 May; and, *Sussex Advertiser*, 23 May. For the Keymer area fires see: *Sussex Advertiser*, 25 April (two fires at Keymer, both on 20 April); and, *Hastings & Cinque Ports Iris*, 30 April (one fire at Hurstpierpoint, 24 April 1831).

²⁰ *Kent Herald*, 26 May; *Maidstone Journal*, 31 May. Lord Camdem, Willington Street, to Melbourne, 15 June, enclosing letters from Sir Edward Knatchbull, Provender, Faversham, 13 June; Earl of Winchelsea, 12 June; Rev. Poore, Murston, 11 June 1831, PRO HO 52/13, ff.54-61.

²¹ *Maidstone Journal*, 21 June; *Kent Herald*, 7 July; *Rochester Gazette*, 21 June 1831.

²² *Kent and Essex Mercury*, 20 September 1831.

By the end of July overt protest was defiantly back on the agenda. Starting in the countryside surrounding Chichester, bands of labourers collected to 'fix' a price for their harvest labours. Their tactics became increasingly aggressive as attempts were made to draw ever more parishes into the scheme, evinced by 50 Sidlesham labourers who marched to Selsey in an attempt to forcibly compel the labourers there to join them. The employment of 'West Countrymen' was a further cause of 'great complaint', and at West Wittering the local labourers even instigated an attack.²³

By early August overt protest had also been renewed in two other Swing heartlands: the vicinities of Elham and Newington-next-Sittingbourne. The Elham area protests started when Mr. Harvey, a victim of machine breaking ten months previously, had a threshing machine destroyed on his Barham farm. Within a week a further machine was destroyed, this time at Ripple, near Deal. 'The Peasantry openly state', claimed the Deal Bench, 'that it has arisen from the conviction of Government that they cannot punish Machine breaking by law and that consequently orders are sent out to New South Wales to release and send home those who have been transported for that offence'. By setting free those men who were found guilty of breaking machines before the end of their sentence, the rural poor understood that there was 'no law to punish that offence', information that had been propagated by the key instigator of the Ripple machine breakers, a regular reader, and lender, of Cobbett's *Political Register*. This Kent propagandist, however, did not join his men on the machine breaking mission, presumably not convinced by his own rhetoric about the English legal system.²⁴ Protests in this part of Kent were not confined to the destruction of threshing machines. Attempts by farmers to mow their corn (to use scythes rather than sickles in reaping the corn) were only partially successful. Numerous farmers in the triangle between Canterbury, Dover and Deal had their scythes destroyed; near Ripple mown wheat was scattered over the fields, roads and thrown into ponds; at Maxton the 'large party of fellows' was comprised almost solely of bricklayers, and at Bridge attempts to mow the wheat using Irish labour provoked both the destruction of scythes and a turn-out of local labourers. Tensions engendered by the willingness of migrant labourers to use scythes and work for whatever wages they were offered lead to various other 'disputes' in East Kent, nowhere more dramatically than at Hougham, where a harvest gang were beset upon by 'some miscreants' who broke their sickles, assaulted them, stripped them, and robbed them before dragging them through a horse pond.²⁵

²³ *Brighton Gazette*, 28 July 1831. One of the Sidlesham men, according to press reports, was committed for assaulting a Selsey labourer.

²⁴ *Kent Herald*, 4 August. Deal Bench to Melbourne, 5 and 9 August 1831, PRO HO 52/13, ff.75-6 and 81-2.

²⁵ Deal Bench to Melbourne, 5 August, PRO HO 52/13, ff.75-6; *Kentish Gazette*, 9 and 12 August; *Kent and Essex Mercury*, 9 August; *Kent Herald*, 18 August 1831.

Before the end of August the harvest protests spread to Wingham, another Swing epicentre, where a 'considerable number of the 'peasantry' assembled and forced all they met to join them' in their attempt to prevent the farmers from mowing their wheat and using threshing machines.²⁶ More intriguingly, protests also spread into Romney Marsh, where fears for the safety of the marsh machines had already led to a party of Dragoons being stationed at Romney to stop people from entering the marsh. This cordon, however, did nothing to stop a party of between 25 and 30 men descending from the hills on the night of 15 August and proceeding to destroy two machines at Burmarsh and Bonnington. Again it was reported that 'the people' thought it was 'no offence' to break threshing machines. So tense was the atmosphere in and around the Marsh that Knatchbull's clergyman brother, also the tithe holder for Aldington and Smeeth, attempted to undertake a civil action against the agriculturalists and tithe payers for publishing the minutes of a meeting they had held to petition against the payment of tithes, presumably in fear that such a public outing of his intolerance would unite the poor and farmers in a concerted attempt to force a reduction in the tithes.²⁷

At Newington, 'the very same village where the Mobbing commenced last year' the disturbances began on 2 August with a meeting at the same Beer Shop made notorious in 1830, before traversing several parishes pressing all the labourers they could find. Their numbers thus swollen, they proceeded, armed with sticks, to the farmers' houses where they used the 'most violent and abusive language' in their attempt to 'raise the price of labour' and prevent the employment of 'strangers' in the corn harvest. This was no isolated outbreak: three parties were in operation at the same time, thereby displaying signs of meticulous planning and strict organisation. One of the parties crossed the Medway and passed into the Isle of Grain, ensuring that a huge tract of North Kent was under this universal plan. Rev. Poore and his Chatham counterparts immediately rose to the challenge, and despite similar mobbings on the following two days soon managed to secure several ringleaders in Canterbury and Chatham gaols, whilst also negotiating the assistance of a troop of Dragoons to help restore the peace.²⁸

This rash of overt risings did not extend beyond the end of August. The experience of 1830 had woken the seemingly dormant (since 1801) realisation that overt protests needed to be quickly suppressed in order to avoid them snowballing into a potentially more serious movement. The outbreaks at Barham and Ripple (both in the area operated by the Elham

²⁶ *Maidstone Journal*, 30 August; *Kent Herald*, 1 September 1831.

²⁷ Camden, Wilderness, to Melbourne, 28 August, enclosing a letter from Lord Deedes, Saltwood, n.d. (but 15 or 16 August); W. Stringer, Newhall, Dymchurch to Melbourne, 16, 17, 18 (enclosing depositions) and 20 August, PRO HO 52/13, ff.66-9, 88-90, 91-2, 93-103, and 79-80; *Kentish Gazette*, 23 August. *Kent Herald*, 28 August 1831.

gang), Newington (an important Swing epicentre) and in the Romney Marsh all provoked judicial proceedings whilst the earlier disturbances around Chichester were effectively put down. In East Sussex there was no tangible sign of overt protest, a spate of incendiary fires in late May and early June²⁹ was followed by a second wave at the height of the corn harvest, this time allied to threatening letters bemoaning the pitifully low harvest wages on offer.³⁰ The repercussion of the failure to resurrect Swing was, again, to drive protest underground and into the night. The level of incendiarism grew steadily throughout the autumn, with four cases in September, ten cases in October, and fourteen in November, whilst malicious damage, plant maiming and animal maiming were also frequently resorted to during the Autumn and Winter. Moreover, these covert protests were most intense where the earlier overt protests had been suppressed.³¹

The Canterbury-Deal-Dover area witnessed at least five cases of arson and one case of animal maiming. The first of these fires again targeted Mr. Harvey in revenge for the apprehension of a man involved in breaking his threshing machine. Whilst many labourers gathered at the fire, almost all refused to assist, the *Times* reporting a 'continued state of warfare between employers and labourers'.³² The vicinity of Chichester witnessed three incendiary fires and one letter threatening

if you don't imploy youre one peeppel and heay + ha others of i will frei you
bilden so take noles, and tha other house to for jam [I am] damb if I don't do
it

thereby suggesting attempts by farmers to avoid and ignore their responsibilities in parochial employment schemes were increasingly a forum for rural protest.³³ The area between

²⁸ Rev. Poore, Murston to Melbourne, 4, 5 and 6 August; J. Bradley, Sittingbourne to Melbourne, 6 August 1831, PRO HO 52/13, ff.78, 87-88, 72-74a, and 70-71.

²⁹ *Hastings & Cinque Ports Iris*, 21 May and 4 June; *Sussex Advertiser*, 23 and 30 May; *Kentish Gazette*, 3 June 1831.

³⁰ *Brighton Gazette*, 25 August; *Sussex Advertiser*, 29 August; *Kentish Gazette*, 30 August; *Maidstone Journal*, 30 August. Plans were also afoot at Rye to sabotage the work underway to repair the sluice destroyed a year earlier. By October work was so advanced though as to render any attack useless: W. Pomfret, Rye to Thomas Law Hodges, 24 September and 12 October, PRO HO 52/15, ff.16-8 and 34-6. Meanwhile by late August an 'operatives Union' had formed at Brighton, attracting in the region of 100 members to its Monday night meetings: *Brighton Gazette*, 1 September 1831.

³¹ See Appendix 3.1.

³² Camden, Arlington Street to Melbourne, 7 September, enclosing, William Deedes, Sandling, to Camden, 4 September; PRO HO 52/13, ff.30-1; W. Hughes D'Aeth, Knowlton Court, nr. Wingham to Melbourne, 16 November, PRO HO 64/2 pp.421-4; *Kentish Gazette*, 2 and 20 September, 15 November; *Times*, 10 September; *Kent Herald*, 29 September. The fire at Eastry prompted Sir J. Grey to report that the 'horrid scenes of last year have returned': Sir J. Grey, Ramsgate to Melbourne, 17 November 1831, PRO HO 52/13, ff.32-38.

³³ CJ Saudham, Washington to Phillips, 21 September, PRO HO 52/15, ff.13-14; Indictment of James Shepherd, 30, labourer, Sussex Winter Assizes 1831, PRO ASSI 94/2104; Duke of Richmond, Chichester to Melbourne, 27 December 1831, PRO HO 64/2 pp.571-3; *Brighton Herald*, 7 January 1832.

Faversham and Sittingbourne was scarred by a further five fires and one case of animal maiming.³⁴ The most dramatic event, however, occurred in early October at Frindsbury, on the edge of the Isle of Grain where a not unusual attempted assassination of a farmer, who had employed Irish reapers during the harvest, ended with his tragic death.

A shooting at Wadhurst was not so 'successful'. The collection of the great tithes in kind had generated many threats towards the tithe holder, Mr. Crouch, who consequently placed a watch on his stack-yard. One late September night a man was seen between the ricks. Crouch's reward for foiling their attempts at incendiarism was to be shot at the following night. The following Saturday a group of people who had gathered by one of Crouch's barns called over Crouch's assistant and threatened that if he 'appeared' again they would murder him, but either way if they had a match they would set fire to the stacks. Four of these men were subsequently apprehended and committed to trial at the Quarter Sessions. A month later Wadhurst became the latest parish to suffer at the hands of incendiaries.³⁵

Early November did witness what appeared to be a slight change in tactics through the adoption of barracking and burning in effigy of various Bishops and Grandees for their anti-reform stance and support for the tithe system. These disturbances occurred almost entirely in south-eastern towns though, the sole exception of the large Kentish village of Wye where the Earl of Winchelsea's effigy bearing the label "No tithes! No quit rents!! No anti-reformers!!!" was ceremoniously burnt.³⁶ Another important sub-urban event occurred at Rye, where advance notices were put up calling the labouring classes of Rye and the adjacent parishes and 'summoning' all millers, farmers and merchants to the 'annual meeting', a repeat of the meeting in 1830. Despite the presence of a 50-strong military detachment and the farmer's attempts to 'dissuade' their labourers' from attending, enough people did attend for the *Kent Herald* to report that a 'serious riot' had occurred.³⁷ An even more threatening fracas occurred at Billingshurst in early November when about 100 labourers surrounded the farmers gathered in the vestry and handed them a letter demanding wages of 2/- a day for married men, and 2/- a week for the third child and above. Billingshurst, so claimed the *Kent Herald*, again the reporter of events in neighbouring Sussex, was not an unlikely location for

³⁴ *Maidstone Gazette*, 11 October; *Kent Herald*, 1 December; *Kentish Gazette*, 11 October, 1 November 1831, and 3 Jan (this fire at Throwley on 30 December symbolically targeted the threshing shed); Indictment of Richard Kelcey, 40, Kent Lent Assizes 1832, PRO ASSI 94/2129.

³⁵ *Maidstone Journal*, 11 October and 15 November. *Brighton Gazette*, 6 October; *Times*, 3 November 1831.

³⁶ *Kent and Essex Mercury*, 8 November. At Farnham there had been 'much mischief of late' regarding the campaign for Parliamentary reform: R. Stedman, Godalming to Melbourne, 3 November, PRO HO 52/12, ff.372-3. At Margate threatening letters were sent to the parish officers and inflammatory placards and handbills were posted around the town: John Boys, Margate to Melbourne, 3 November, HO 52/13, ff.27-8. At Canterbury where an effigy of the Bishop of Oxford was 'seized' by another effigy representing the devil, before both effigies were seized by the City authorities: W. Croft, Canterbury to Melbourne, 4 November, PRO HO 52/13, f.24; *Times*, 11 November 1831.

such an event: 99 men were out of employ or employed by the parish and mostly subsisted on a diet of potatoes and resided in outhouses.³⁸ The failure to revive Swing during the autumn and winter of 1831 was, according to a West Sussex magistrate, due to the 'knowledge' of what had happened at Bristol 'and elsewhere'.³⁹

This analysis was at least partially correct. Undoubtedly the level of discernible protest until the winter of 1832 was not comparable to the same period in 1831, let alone 1830, despite falling agricultural wages and chronic unemployment. Five and three cases of arson respectively have been identified for the first and second quarters of 1832, representing a substantial reduction on the 20 and 23 cases identified in the same period in 1831. During the harvest – the third quarter – the decline was arrested with eight cases as opposed to twelve in 1831 and by the final three months had been turned into an increase in 1831, with 34 cases as opposed to 31.⁴⁰ Unsurprisingly though, even before the winter poor relief, and particularly parochial employment, were major theatres of unrest. A 'combination' of the Pulborough parish labourers in order to compel the overseers to increase the rate of parish wages was only unusual in that it ended in the courts. An attack on the Greenwich overseer by two parish workers, a labourer and a carpenter, which unusually, for assault cases, ended in the Assize dock, represented only the peak of the iceberg.⁴¹ Parishes keen to reduce expenditure would have seen the merits of not seeking a judicial, and therefore expensive, solution to insubordination; guilty verdicts would only force the guilty party's family onto the parish and possibly provoke covert reprisals. The problems created by employment schemes and the fallacy of judicial solutions to resistance was nowhere more clearly highlighted than at Brighton. A record number of applications for relief and employment in Brighton during the winter and spring of 1831-2 forced the Guardians into employing those who applied in the demoralising and demeaning task of strolling the beaches collecting boulders. Meeting of the Guardians and Directors of the Brighton Poor: 'our Parochial affairs, during the last winter, were more serious than at any former period. More persons applied for employment than was ever known to be the case before; and there was less employment for them'. The 'degree of insubordination, sufficient to excite alarm' shown by the paupers provoked a change in policy, the poor being put to work at digging flints became equally bumptious, insulting and then assaulting their superintendent. The summary conviction of one key antagonist for a fortnight in the House of Correction then prompted his 200 comrades to refuse to work at

³⁷ W. Lamb, Mayor of Rye to Melbourne, 7 and 9 November, PRO HO 52/15, 22-3 and 39-40; *Kent Herald*, 10 November 1831.

³⁸ *Kent Herald*, 24 November 1831.

³⁹ R. Clark, Bognor to Phillips, 9 November 1831, PRO HO 52/15, ff.37-8.

⁴⁰ See Appendix 3.1 and Map 3.1.

⁴¹ Indictment of Jesse Naldrett, George Hayler and William Hamshire, Pulborough, for combination, West Sussex Easter Quarter Sessions, 1832, WSCRO QR/Q 52. Indictment of Robert Stevens, 21, and John Shirsby, 33, for assault, Kent Lent Assizes, 1832, PRO ASSI 94/2129.

all.⁴² Attempts by the poor to gain economic redress through judicial proceedings proved equally useless, as discovered by the 20 Ringmer labourers who attended the Lewes Bench to complain about a lack of employment.⁴³

Arson and other forms of covert protest were deployed against oppressive overseers and farmers. When a member of the Uckfield vestry had his wheat barn set on fire in June two brothers, both parish labourers, were apprehended on suspicion: initially nothing transpired but, when Mrs. Fuller had her hay stacks fired in November, one of the brothers was again apprehended. Nineteen year-old George Wren, 'whose conduct and levity were notorious', was indicted at the Sussex Assizes and hanged for a crime he vehemently denied committing. Before his dreadful demise Wren took the opportunity of his final speech to those gathered to launch a devastating riposte:

I am brought to this fatal scaffold to be murdered...I am brought to this like a bullock to the slaughter...what must those poor people feel, at the last moment, who brought me to this ignominious end...I was condemned by the people of Uckfield, but God forbid I should accuse all the people of that parish.

Wren then ended his speech by naming, and thereby shaming, those who were instrumental in his demise.⁴⁴ Thomas Shepherd, a 23 year-old Sandhurst labourer, was equally unrepentant for maliciously cutting 100 hills of the overseer's hops: 'I owed Mr. Humphrey a grudge and now I have paid him off'.⁴⁵

Attempts were again made during the summer and early autumn of 1832 to revive Swing, not least at Croydon where a gang of fifteen 'notorious bad characters' destroyed a threshing machine, and on the edge of Canterbury where a farmer received a Swing letter. The Earl of Winchelsea was three times the victim of incendiarism, supposedly, so reckoned the *Kentish Gazette*, in protest at the Earl's public position as Colonel of the East Kent Yeomanry Corps. The vicinity of Sevenoaks also bore witness to a wave of incendiary fires reminiscent of the start of Swing. The apprehension of two individuals suspected of firing five stacks at Sundridge was popularly attributed to James Booth, the assistant overseer, who for his efforts became the latest victim before being assailed by a 'mob' of over 200 people who gathered at his house pelting the building and the ill-fated Booth with stones, before then

⁴² *Brighton Gazette*, 15 March, and 26 April 1832.

⁴³ *Brighton Herald*, 5 May 1832.

⁴⁴ *Sussex Advertiser*, 11 June; *Brighton Herald*, 16 June, and 22 December; Indictment of George Wren, 19, Sussex Winter Assizes, 1832, PRO ASSI 94/2137.

⁴⁵ Indictment of Thomas Shepherd, 23, and various depositions, West Kent Summer Quarter Sessions 1832, CKS QS BW 131.

burning him in effigy.⁴⁶ Riverhill near Petworth, the location of the fire that announced Swing's arrival in West Sussex, was again blighted by an incendiary fire in mid November, a *Brighton Herald* headline not unreasonably proclaiming 'Swing Again'. A further four incendiary fires occurred in West Sussex during the next four weeks, which although symptomatic of a deep depression in the fortunes of the rural poor was hardly indicative of Swing reborn.⁴⁷

The level of covert protest fell yet further in 1833. Of the 23 cases uncovered, only five occurred in the first six months, indeed the majority of the fires occurred after the harvest.⁴⁸ Popular protest before the harvest was largely predicated by employment and poor relief disputes⁴⁹ whilst farmers maintained their calls for the abolishment of tithes in a series of public meetings throughout the south-east.⁵⁰ Whilst the harvest of 1833 essentially replicated the events of 1831 and 1832 - two incendiary fires within a week - the 'dreadful consequence' of farmers again attempting to mow their wheat and the destruction of another threshing machine occurred in the area operated by the Elham gang;⁵¹ a further two fires occurred before the end of the year.⁵² Irish reapers were attacked at Clayton in East Sussex and tithe collectors were threatened at nearby Barcombe⁵³ – the level of popular protest falling well short of the previous year.

This relative quietude was in no element a function of improved conditions: if localised emigration schemes helped ease 'supply' problems in the labour market, they also engendered other tensions whilst also allowing émigrés one last opportunity to make their

⁴⁶ John Bell, Street End House, nr Canterbury to Melbourne, 14 August; Sevenoaks Bench to Melbourne, 24 November; Earl De La Warr, Bourn Hall, Caxton, to Melbourne, 10 September, PRO HO 52/17, ff.214 and 220-2, and 52/20, ff.103-5; *Kent Herald*, 6 September 1832. In a similar vein an assemblage at Rainham assaulted the overseer. Those assembled were employed in the parish gravel pit and at the end of the week instead of getting the obligatory certificates stating how many days work they done they proceeded straight to the overseer and with violence demanded a week's wages. The pit foreman later declared that the men had not earned more than a shilling. Thus the event was not born out of the essence of Swing, a living wage for a fair days work. See: *Rochester Gazette*, 1 January 1833.

⁴⁷ *Brighton Herald*, 24 November, 1 and 15 December; *Sussex Advertiser*, 10 December 1832.

⁴⁸ See Appendix 3.1.

⁴⁹ The most explicit examples are: Farmer Burns received several gun shots through his bedroom windows. Overseer Sladden at Hoath had his barn set on fire, during the attempt to extinguish the flames Mr. Williamson of the Phoenix office was 'grossly assaulted'. Mr. Duke, the Frindsbury overseer, had his windows peppered with stones. The proprietor of the Chafford Paper Mills at Tunbridge Wells received a threatening letter demanding that his bailiff was discharged; and the Mayor and Magistrates were pelted with stones whilst meeting at the Canterbury Guildhall. *Sussex Advertiser*, 21 January; *Kentish Gazette*, 8 March; *Kent Herald*, 28 March; Mr. Kingsford, clerk to St Augustines JPs, Canterbury to Melbourne, 16 February, PRO HO 64/3 f. 304; Clerk to Canterbury JPs to Melbourne, 3 April 1833, PRO HO 52/22, ff.117-120.

⁵⁰ *Kentish Gazette*, 8 January, and 24 December; *Kentish Observer*, 31 January; *Sussex Advertiser*, 25 March; Accounts of the Pevensey Anti-Tithe Meeting, held 1 February 1833, ESCRO PEV 1272.

⁵¹ *Kent Herald*, 15 August; *Kentish Observer*, 22 August 1833.

⁵² *Kent Herald*, 7 November; *Dover Telegraph*, 7 December 1833.

⁵³ *Sussex Advertiser*, 5 August 1833. Rev. Robert Allen, Barcombe, to Melbourne, 7 March 1834, PRO HO 64/4, ff.118-9.

revenge against the oppressors they were leaving behind.⁵⁴ Rather, the passing of the long anticipated Reform Bill was in no short measure believed to lead to a great new age for the working man.⁵⁵ Whilst all south-eastern towns hosted reform clubs, many villages were equally active, including Aylesford, Charing, Stone, Chart, Leeds, Thunham, Debtling, and Sutton Valence who all sent petitions in support of reform to Parliament in February 1831.⁵⁶ Reform Festivals were hosted in large towns and small villages alike; the celebrations at small Sutton Valence were emblematic, all the labourers were treated to two 2 lbs per adult and 1lb per child of beef as well as bread and ale. Canterbury was overrun with a 'vast influx of gaily dressed visitors from the surrounding countryside', some of whom were treated to the vast dinner laid on for 1,500 covers. With the combination of such euphoria and exceptionally generous acts of paternalism, it was no wonder that every face 'beamed with satisfaction'.⁵⁷

Cobbett, did not join in the celebrations. Instead he commenced upon a tour of market towns in order to remind people that the Bill would be 'a bundle of waste paper' unless the newly enfranchised campaigned for further change.⁵⁸ The message was heeded; extant political unions stepped up and increasingly made public their activities whilst elsewhere new political unions were formed.⁵⁹ The urban political unions even sent missionaries into the countryside, not least the strong Brighton Union,⁶⁰ who, assisted by their satellite union at

⁵⁴ For emigration schemes and the vigorous promotion of emigrant ships to North America, see: *Kent Herald*, 25 February and 10 May 1831, 3 May 1832; *Sussex Advertiser*, 11 February 1833. For an earlier case involving pre-emigration protest see Chapter 2, pp.31-2.

⁵⁵ At Worthing it was even believed that trade would again flourish as the result of the Bill: *Brighton Herald*, 26 May 1832.

⁵⁶ *Maidstone Gazette*, 1 March; *Kentish Gazette*, 1 November 1831.

⁵⁷ *Kentish Gazette*, 29 June; *Times*, 26 July, 7 and 8 September; *Kent Herald*, 2 and 9 August, 6, 13 and 20 September 1832.

⁵⁸ *Brighton Gazette*, 26 July; *Sussex Advertiser*, 6 August 1832.

⁵⁹ The record in this respect is defective. The difference between Reform Unions, which were tolerated, and Political Unions is often negligible if slightly obscure. For instance at Rochester, a well-established centre of radical and popular politics, meetings calling for reform had a long history. The Political Unions established in Rochester and the vicinity in late 1831 seemed to be an attempt at reasserting calls for a more radical reform in Parliamentary democracy in the wake of the almost universal support for the fairly moderate Reform Bill that had effectively suffocated calls for other causes; namely universal male suffrage and vote by ballot. In Kentish London, a bastion of artisan strength, no such distinction was necessary though, 10,000 of the inhabitants of Blackheath, Greenwich, Charlton, Deptford gathered under the auspices of the Greenwich and Deptford Political Union on Blackheath to about 10,000 bodies, with their banners promoting both 'Union' and 'Reform'. *Times*, 10 June; Mayor of Rochester to Melbourne, 20 November 1831, PRO HO 52/13, ff.25-6. *Maidstone Journal*, 29 May 1832.

⁶⁰ Several attempts had been made in Brighton to establish Political Unions, some had 'quietly died off in consequence of the conduct of some members being grossly outrageous', others had been 'cured altogether of a taste of politics' and 'one or two' societies had 'dissolved themselves when the King's Proclamation was issued last winter [1831]'. By June 1832 attention was again called to their existence by the announcement of five branches being in existence and affiliated to a Parent Society. An initial brief flurry of publicity, the result of a general meeting at the Bricklayer's Arms for which the public were invited to attend and enrol themselves as members, was followed by something of a retreat back to their artisanal roots. This however only acted to consolidate the Union's strength. A visit by Henry Hetherington, the publisher of the already notorious *Poor Man's Guardian*, to address the Union in

Uckfield, organised a union 'on political subjects' at Horsted Keynes in November 1832. Despite attempts to suppress these meetings by using the Riot Act, similar meetings continued well into 1833, including at West Chiltington where the Union was 'connected to the one in Billingshurst, which is a branch of a very violent one in Horsham' and met every Wednesday at 'the house of a publican whose principles of both politics and religion are notorious', the pub having been the scene of 'a violent riot...in November 1830'.⁶¹ Attempts to suppress rural political unions helped to expose the reality that Reform was a minor concession and offered the poor nothing.

October 1832 was followed by a wave of new activity, for which see below. *Brighton Gazette*, 21 June, and 26 July; *Brighton Herald*, 13 October, and 10 November 1832.

⁶¹ *Brighton Herald*, 24 November; *Sussex Advertiser*, 26 November, and 3 December; W. Mabbott, Uckfield, to Melbourne, 20 November 1832; Rev. W. Barlee, West Chiltington, to Melbourne, 4 May 1833, PRO HO 52/20, ff.11-12, and 52/23, ff.12-3.

Chapter 9: Swing's last-stand?: Popular Protest and the New Poor Law, 1834-c.1840

I: Welfare after Swing

Hobsbawm and Rudé correctly noted that 'the historian of the Last Labourers' Rising may be fascinated, touched and moved by his [sic] subject, but he will not be able to avoid the final question: what did it actually achieve?'.¹ Throughout the south-east wages were increased, but as early as the termination of the Winter Assizes farmers and vestries started to renege on their promises, something even the intensive resort to incendiarism did nothing to stop. In certain locales threshing machines were no longer used, but equally strong is the evidence which suggests that in many places farmers continued to use threshing machines, even in the winter of 1830-31; the recurrence of machine breaking in 1831, 1832 and 1833 was no more effective than the events of 1830 in achieving a *total* cessation.² Swing's many participants may have succeeded in putting rural unemployment more strongly into the public eye, including that of legislators – the only initial parliamentary attempt to address the causes of Swing was a bill introduced by the Earl of Winchelsea in 1831 that legalised, and made formal, labour rates – but such attention did little to stop the abuses of vestries and individual farmers that so rankled many of Swing's accomplices.³ Swing also helped to politicise many rural workers, but their involvement in politics was bitterly resisted by a ruling class still fearful of revolution, dashing the hopes of many labourers and artisans that the passing of the 'Reform Bill' would lead to a golden age for the working-man. What Swing undeniably did achieve was something that few had set out for: it deepened the already widening gap between the rulers of rural England and the ruled.

'I don't like the middle classes...the higher and lower classes there's some good in, but the middle classes are all affectation and conceit and pretence and concealment', bellicosely proclaimed Lord Melbourne to the future Queen Victoria. The lower classes knew their place, they 'were content to pull forelocks and doff bonnets until eternity'. It took the potentially revolutionary Swing to lift this veil of incredulity, not just from Melbourne's eyes but also those of many aristocrats who believed their paternalism had

¹ Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p.281.

² Evidence for this paragraph comes from chapter 8.

³ A. Brundage, *The Making of the New Poor Law: The Politics of Inquiry, Enactment and Implementation, 1832-39* (London, 1978), pp.17-19. Other Bills had been attempted to be introduced but were frustrated in their passage; for instance as early as 7 December 1830 Winchelsea had attempted to introduce a Bill to 'better the condition of the labouring poor' by revising aspects of the Poor Laws: *Times*, 8 December 1830.

bought protection from the potentially rebellious lower orders.⁴ But paternalism and the Poor Law had failed, for:

No village, hamlet, or parish was safe from the work of the incendiary, and when the flames were raging at the highest, the labourers instead of helping to extinguish them, were seen silently looking on.

The centrality of the Poor Law to the potentially revolutionary Swing turned the already considerable number of calls for reform into a raging torrent. When in February 1832 Lord Althorp, Lord Grey's Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced the Government's intention to appoint a Royal Commission to investigate the current state of the Poor Laws, few were surprised. Although the Report of the Royal Commission was not published until 20 February 1834 (with detailed appendices only made completely public several months later) interim findings were published, but only as a ploy to win support for the pet policies of various Commissioners.⁵ When the final bill was introduced to Parliament, thereby becoming public, on 17 April 1834 – the Cabinet had been discussing draft bills several weeks before the Report's publication – it received no effective opposition in either the first or second readings. Indeed, rural MPs were generally supportive precisely because of the impact of Swing. Of 22 MPs who voted against the second reading – 319 voted in favour – Major A.W. Beauclerk, sitting for the sub-London seat of East Surrey, a hotbed of artisan radicalism, was the only south-eastern representative.⁶ So passive was the parliamentary opposition that the Canterbury Board of Guardians met pre-emptively to decide how to implement the new Act. The bill's passing into committee on 14 May did provoke a more sustained rural response, not least a plethora of petitions from the south-east. The well-respected and influential West Kent Liberal MP, Thomas Law Hodges, foretold that the bill would 'wean the people of the country of that feeling which they at present entertained of looking up to their neighbours for protection'. His opposition, so claimed the *Kent Herald*, the only south-eastern newspaper opposed to the passing of the Act, mirrored that of his constituents.⁷

The *Sussex Advertiser* remained confident, however, that the Act would be passed despite the 'senseless clamour which parish vestries, and some diurnal papers [the *Times*] have endeavoured to raise'. And so it was to be. After being reported out of committee on 27 June, the third reading took place on 1 July and, despite the apprehensions of Hodges and his supporters that the bill would alienate the 'affections of the lower classes...from the

⁴ Ziegler, *Melbourne*, pp.138-9.

⁵ Brundage, *The Making of the New Poor Law*, pp. 5, 22-42; *Sussex Advertiser*, 11 February 1833.

⁶ Brundage, *The Making of the New Poor Law*, pp.52-6.

⁷ *Kentish Gazette*, 29 April; *Kent Herald*, 15 May; *Kentish Observer*, 5 June; *Rochester Gazette*, 17 June; *Maidstone Journal*, 8 July; *Times*, 28 July 1834; Brundage, *The Making of the New Poor Law*, pp.59-60.

higher', it was passed 187 votes to 53. The bill, with minor changes to several clauses made by the Lords and ratified by the Commons, received Royal Assent on 14 August.⁸ This was Swing's only enduring achievement. Whilst popular reactions to the New Poor Law (herein 'NPL') have become an important sub-genre of protest studies, few studies have located this opposition within the context that shaped the Bill.⁹ If Swing was central, as I have suggested, to the Government's commitment to totally reworking the poor relief system, did it also shape the way in which the rural poor resisted the new system? Moreover, in light of the persistence of overt protests on a range of different issues in the three years after Swing, which effectively attempted to enforce the promises made during the riots, 'namely the restoration of rural communities' economic and social equilibrium', would the revolutionary upheaval in the poor laws also provoke a change in the tactics of rural resistance? Or would the multi-issue Swing be revived, with changes in the method of poor relief also focusing attentions on wages, tithes, taxes and rents? This is not to say that the opposition to the NPL by the rural poor deserves to be studied as being important in its own right, something clearly demonstrated by Professor Wells' impressive study of the opposition in Kent and Sussex highlights.¹⁰

II: *The Assistant Poor Law Commissioners Early Mission to the South-East*

Before the end of 1834 Edwin Chadwick, secretary to the Poor Law Commission (henceforth 'PLC'), circulated the Act to all magistrates and requested their support in building on 'missionary work' undertaken by men such as Sussex JP William Day (later an Assistant Poor Law Commissioner) who had 'transformed' the finances and attitudes of the Mayfield poor.¹¹ Assistant Poor Law Commissioners were dispatched into the provinces (a move supported by many landed proprietors) before the winter of 1834, and wasted no time in attempting to force vestries into enacting certain clauses of the Act. William Hawley, posted to East Sussex, was particularly active, claiming with missionary zeal that his campaign was not an exercise in reducing costs but an attempt to get 'rid of...[the] worst and most idle characters'. Whilst many vestries were afraid to 'take upon themselves the

⁸ *Sussex Advertiser*, 26 May 1834; Brundage, *The Making of the New Poor Law*, pp.67 and 73.

⁹ The key texts on popular opposition to the NPL remain: N. Edsall, *The Anti-Poor Law Movement, 1834-44* (Manchester, 1971); A. Digby, 'The Rural Poor Law', in D. Fraser (ed.), *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth-Century* (London, 1976); and, J. Knott, *Popular Opposition to the 1834 Poor Law* (London, 1986). For the south-east see: J. Lowerson, 'The Aftermath of Swing: Anti-Poor Law Movements and Rural Trades Unions in the South East of England', in A. Charlesworth (ed.), *Rural Social Change and Conflicts since 1550* (Hull, 1983); *Idem.*, 'Anti-Poor Law Movements and Rural Trade Unionism in the South East, 1835', in A. Charlesworth (ed.) *An Atlas of Rural Protest in Britain, 1548-1900* (London, 1983); and R. Wells, 'Resistance to the New Poor Law in the Rural South', in J. Rule and R. Wells, *Crime, Protest and Popular Politics*.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

originating...reformation', others keenly put into force NPL policies. By mid-September several East Kent parishes stopped payments to those residing outwith their parishes regardless of settlement. At Deptford and Greenwich outdoor relief was stopped by early October although the Act only enforced such a step from July 1835. The passing of the bill also coincided with the cutting of agricultural labourers' wages by several Sussex farmers from 12/- to 10/- a week, who pointed to falling agricultural prices.¹²

The early application of the spirit of the NPL provoked immediate protests. The insistence of Hawley that Battle's parish officers should 'ensure that claimants had legitimately expended all their peak harvest earnings before receiving unemployment benefit' prompted a 'street protest' by claimants and a formal protest from vestry to PLC.¹³ The poor in a parish 'not far from Boughton' were in a 'very dissatisfied and refractory state' when the parochial authorities, in the spirit of the NPL, withheld outdoor relief. 'Execrations and threats have been used to an extent productive of some alarm', claimed the crusading *Kent Herald*.¹⁴ Wage cuts and withholding of relief in Sussex led to Swingesque outbreaks of overt protest. At Goring striking labourers assembled at High Down Hill, similar tactics were adopted at Felpham and Flansham and by parishes around Arundel. By mid December the labourers in most West Sussex parishes were reported to have struck work at some time during the preceding six weeks.¹⁵ Tactics in East Sussex were more cautious. A 'peaceful' assemblage of the labouring classes on Ringer Green discussed wages and poor relief. 100 labourers from several different parishes, including 20 from Chailey, in mid-November adopted the by now traditional tactic of descending upon the Lewes Bench to request work and relief. Hawley attended and assiduously took notes of proceedings.¹⁶

Unsurprisingly though, an increased resort to arson, in comparison to the preceding 24 months, was the most visible sign of popular resistance. Whilst early 1834 had witnessed sporadic resort to arson, following the trend set from late 1832, the summer was remarkable for a total absence of incendiary fires in the south-east. But from late October incendiarism recommenced, especially in West Kent.¹⁷ On 25 October Mr. Mosyer, an early Swing victim of incendiarism (see chapter 2), chaired a meeting at St. Mary's Cray, near Sevenoaks, to consider reducing agricultural wages from 12s. to 10s.; his farm was set ablaze the following day. Attempts to both restrict relief and reduce wages at Hoo, near

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.94; Brundage, *The Making of the New Poor Law*, pp.30-32.

¹² Wells, 'Resistance to the New Poor Law', p.95; Brundage, *The Making of the New Poor Law*, pp.105-6. *Kent Herald*, 25 September and 9 October; *Brighton Herald*, 27 September 1834.

¹³ Wells, 'Resistance to the New Poor Law', p.95.

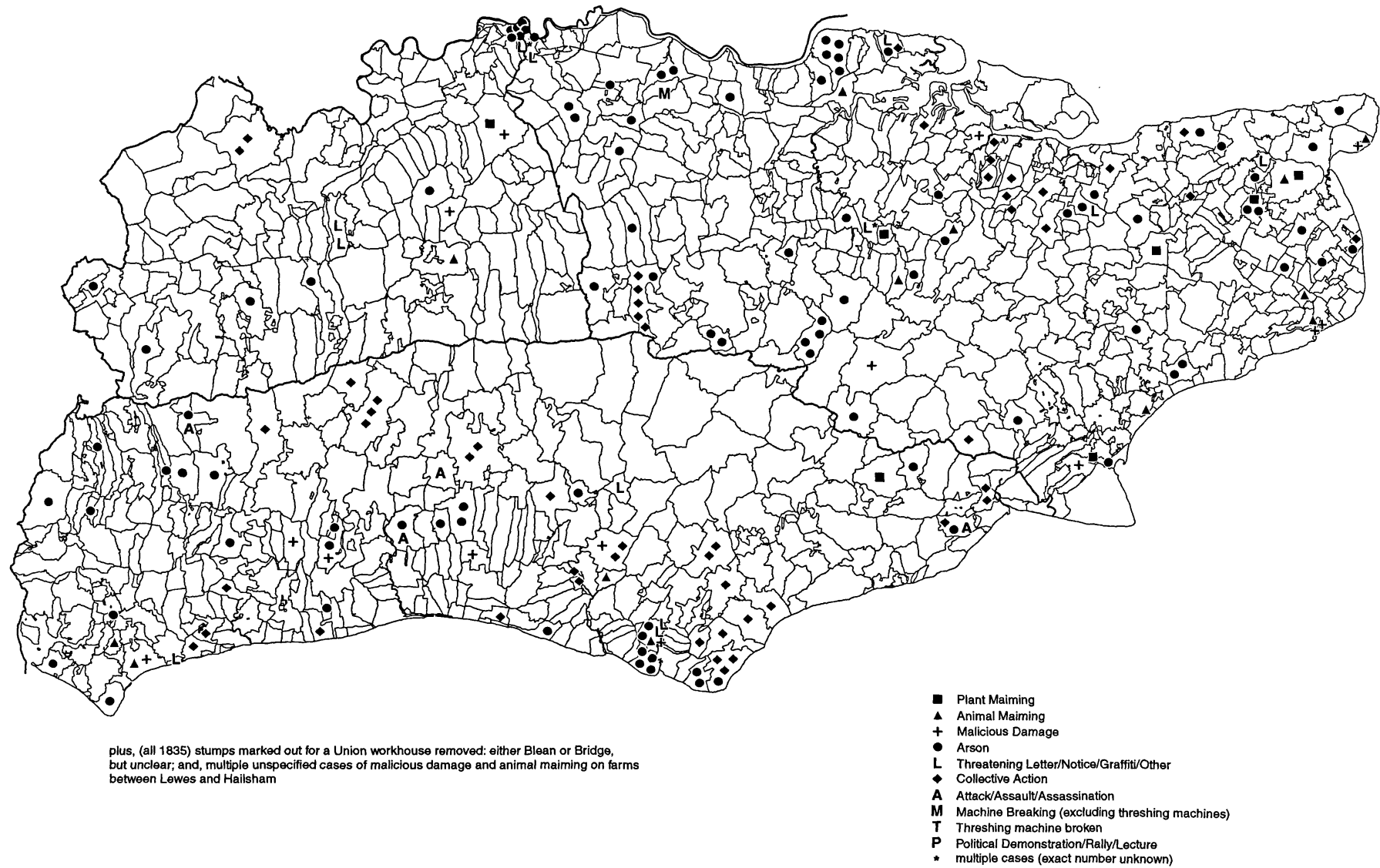
¹⁴ *Kent Herald*, 23 October 1834.

¹⁵ *Kent Herald*, 12 November; *Brighton Herald*, 29 November and 6 December 1834.

¹⁶ *Brighton Herald*, 22 and 29 November 1834.

¹⁷ For details of individual cases see Appendix 3.2.

Map 3.2: Popular Protests During the Implementation of the New Poor Law, 1834 to the end of June 1836



Map 3.3: New Poor Law Unions in South-East England



Based on Data from UKBorders

Rochester, led to several farmers receiving threatening letters, and the firing of overseer Smith's stacks and farm buildings. It transpired that the previous morning he had refused relief to a parishioner who then openly threatened that 'he should hear from him before night'.¹⁸ A count of recorded fires reveals the extent of arson to be no more intense than in either 1831 or 1832 but the alarm generated was far more extreme. Incendiary fires went underreported in the provincial press: the newly established *Gravesend and Milton Journal* soon became blasé in reporting fires; from printing detailed accounts of local fires it soon resorted to stating that 'another fire' had occurred 'during the week', failing to give any other details. Even this lowly standard eventually lapsed to the total non-reportage of local fires.¹⁹ The rise of incendiarism in Kent was real enough though to warrant comment in the Lewes press, and to stimulate 'Societ[ies] for the Protection of Property' in East and West Kent. Meetings establishing the associations were, respectively, chaired by the Earl of Darnley and Sir Edward Knatchbull, both supporters of the NPL, somewhat predictably for the resident gentry stood to benefit most from lower poor rates and the extra power afforded them through plural voting. Moreover, the associations were used to win the support of previously hostile farmers for the NPL: incendiarism derived from the feckless poor, corrupted by the increased (in the aftermath of the Act being passed) spread of seditious material. Local, affiliated associations were soon established throughout West Kent; a tacit recognition that the NPL may provoke Swing-like protests, for which the authorities were well prepared.²⁰

Wage cuts and the reneging on promises made during Swing added to a growing sense of injustice engendered among the rural poor, and in this atmosphere plebeian protest intensified, not least through the sending of threatening letters to 'respectable' farmers.²¹ Moreover their protests also found a voice in the opposition of the majority of ratepayers to the NPL. Meetings arranged by the Assistant Poor Law Commissioners initially were publicity drives to win favour for the NPL amongst substantial ratepayers, but these meetings only heightened the suspicions and opposition of smaller ratepayers; indeed many of these private meetings were bombarded by furious ratepayers who had been excluded.

¹⁸ *Times*, 31 October; *Gravesend and Milton Journal*, 1 November; *Rochester Gazette*, 4 November 1834.

¹⁹ See chapter 8. *Gravesend and Milton Journal*, 23 August (1st issue) onwards, various issues. For instance fires at nearby Cliffe (November 1834) and Higham (January 1835) were not reported but appeared in other Kentish papers: *Rochester Gazette*, 25 November 1834; *Kent Herald*, 15 January 1835.

²⁰ *Sussex Advertiser*, 1 December; *Gravesend and Milton Journal*, 15 November; *Kent Herald*, 13 November; *Kentish Gazette*, 18 November and 2 December 1834.

²¹ For the sending of threatening letters see: *Rochester Gazette*, 4 November (Hoo area); *Kent Herald*, 13 November (Boughton/Selling) and 11 December (Rotherhithe); *Sussex Advertiser*, 24 November (Alfriston); *Maidstone Journal*, 25 November (Maidstone area); *Brighton Herald*, 6 December (Flansham); and, *Gravesend and Milton Journal*, 20 December 1834 (Deptford and New Cross).

Sir Francis Head, the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner despatched to East Kent, convened a meeting as early as mid-November 1834 to convince the hostile Canterbury Guardians of the merits of the proposed union of the seven Canterbury parishes. The *Kentish Gazette* claimed Head won the argument and that the meeting had adjourned to consider where to build two new workhouses. Such claims had little factual basis though, and in February talks resumed when the plan to unite St. Gregory and Staplegate to the City were met with 'almost unanimous disapproval'.²²

At Lewes Hawley's plans for a meeting of all Lewes parishes appeared in the Lewes press. Local feeling was already running high, 'on a late occasion' a banner had been 'exhibited in contravention of the law' bearing the slogan 'No Poor Law Act'. Each parish held preparatory meetings to consider Hawley's proposals. The All Saints meeting rejected them, due to 'politics' said the *Brighton Herald*; the other parish meetings were equally forthright in opposition. Despite this universal hostility Hawley addressed the general meeting with all guns blazing: their resistance was useless, for the proposed Union could be effected by the Commissioners without the parishioners' consent. He went on to discredit the work of the very people he was attempting to win over, their expenditure was too high and they were relieving too many people who should not receive assistance. This approach generated yet greater hostility: Hawley's proposal received only nine votes as opposed to the 'forest of hands', put at between 140-150 people, in opposition.²³

Vestry opposition to proposed Unions was encountered in all south-eastern towns, but was also manifest in the countryside, not least in parishes administered under Gilbert Unions. Head's claims in the *First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners* that he had little difficulty in dissolving Kent's Gilbert's Unions ran contrary to his own experience. The small union of Ruckinge, Orlestone and Warehorne proved to be a continual source of frustration; by early March, Head had already attended three meetings with their guardians who stubbornly even refused to hear him speak. This was the general experience in Kent. Head, exasperated, informed the PLC that 'the difficulties I have encountered in obtaining the dissolutions of the existing unions, have...been very great'. Three months later the Warehorne Union was still frustrating the Assistant Commissioner. As late as March 1836 parish officers at Ramsgate, part of the Thanet Union, still refused to implement a PLC order to remove their poor into the new Union workhouse: because their

²² Wells, 'Resistance to the New Poor Law', pp.95-6; *Kentish Gazette*, 18 November 1834; *Kentish Observer*, 12 February 1835. Head's other early mission was to the Isle of Sheppey where he proposed a union of all seven island parishes: *Rochester Gazette*, 2 December 1834.

²³ *Brighton Herald*, 24 January; *Sussex Advertiser*, 26 January, 2 and 16 February 1835.

Gilbert Union centred on Birchington had not been repealed by the NPL, they deduced that the Commission lacked power to make such an order.²⁴

III: *Popular Protests and the New Poor Law Unions in East Sussex*

The Sussex countryside in early 1835 was largely free from visible protest, but upon the implementation of the new Unions protests, initially covert, as in Kent, recommenced. The Newhaven Union of fourteen parishes was the first NPL Union in Sussex and immediately generated a degree of 'prejudice', but, despite the belief of the *Brighton Herald* that these prejudices 'without a trial, will shortly disappear', prejudice turned to protest. The Dray family at Alfriston were particularly victimised through a series of attacks. Mrs. Dray had eight sheep maliciously killed, another stolen, and another badly injured in late March. A month later she was visited again and had a further sheep stolen. William Dray in early April had 23 sacks of seed corn scattered over ploughed land or emptied into a pond, and two ewes and three lambs were stolen. Doubts over the malicious nature of these acts was eradicated by threats chalked 'upon barn doors and other situations'.²⁵ The 'old and respectable' inhabitants of Ringmer had stones thrown at their windows night after night in early April, a tactic also employed at Poynings against an unpopular bailiff.²⁶ Animal maiming was also employed at Newtimber where Mr. Tapsall had one cow stabbed with a hay cutter while the rest of the herd were turned into the standing wheat. Tapsall also had 'a quantity' of husbandry tackle maliciously destroyed. Such practices persisted into May when Mr. Ellman, the celebrated 'improver' of Southdown sheep, after being elected to chairman of the Board of the West Firle Union had two ewes destroyed by crowbar wielding maimers. Such was the extent of the 'houghing and destruction' of sheep, as well as the malicious destruction of other farm property, in the vicinities of Hailsham and Lewes that a general subscription was entered into to hunt and prosecute the perpetrators.²⁷

Tentatively East Sussex protests became more public. The boundaries between overt and covert were blurred at Eastbourne where an attempt to place men and women in separate workhouses was abandoned due to resistance. The Union Board resolved to still implement the measure though, thereby provoking much 'excitement' amongst the

²⁴ *First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, Appendix B, PRO P.P. 1835, XXXV, cf. Hastings, 'The New Poor Law', p.159; Head, Ashford, to PLC, 4 March 1835, PRO MH 12/5019; *Kent Herald*, 11 June 1835 and 24 March 1836.

²⁵ *Brighton Herald*, 14 February and 7 March; *Sussex Advertiser*, 30 March, 13 and 27 April 1835.

²⁶ *Brighton Herald*, 11 April; *Sussex Advertiser*, 20 April; *Brighton Guardian*, 22 April 1835.

²⁷ *Brighton Guardian*, 22 April; *Kentish Gazette*, 12 May; *Sussex Advertiser*, 18 May 1835.

labourers who did 'not hesitate to speak out in language that cannot fail to be understood'.²⁸ A far more co-ordinated and aggressive attempt to resist NPL doctrines was the furtive attempt at a systematic form of (trade) union amongst agricultural labourers 'in most parishes... east of Battle'. A letter from an anti-NPL 'Sussex Yeoman' appearing in the newly formed and righteously anti-NPL *Brighton Patriot* in late March provided the first evidence of the so-called 'United Brothers of Industry', although as Wells has tentatively suggested the Brothers may well have formed out of post-Swing radical and trade unionist associations in the parishes around Brede. The 300 or so labourers had already met 'several times' at Seddlescomb, paying 4d. per week to attend their meetings chaired by 'a very dangerous character', and held in private to conduct their 'secret business'. The swearing of oaths in private exposed the Brothers to hostility from the authorities in the post-Tolpuddle period, however the depth of support by urban artisans throughout the south-east for the Dorchester Unionists also expressed itself in a wide popular base of support for south-eastern agricultural unionism.²⁹

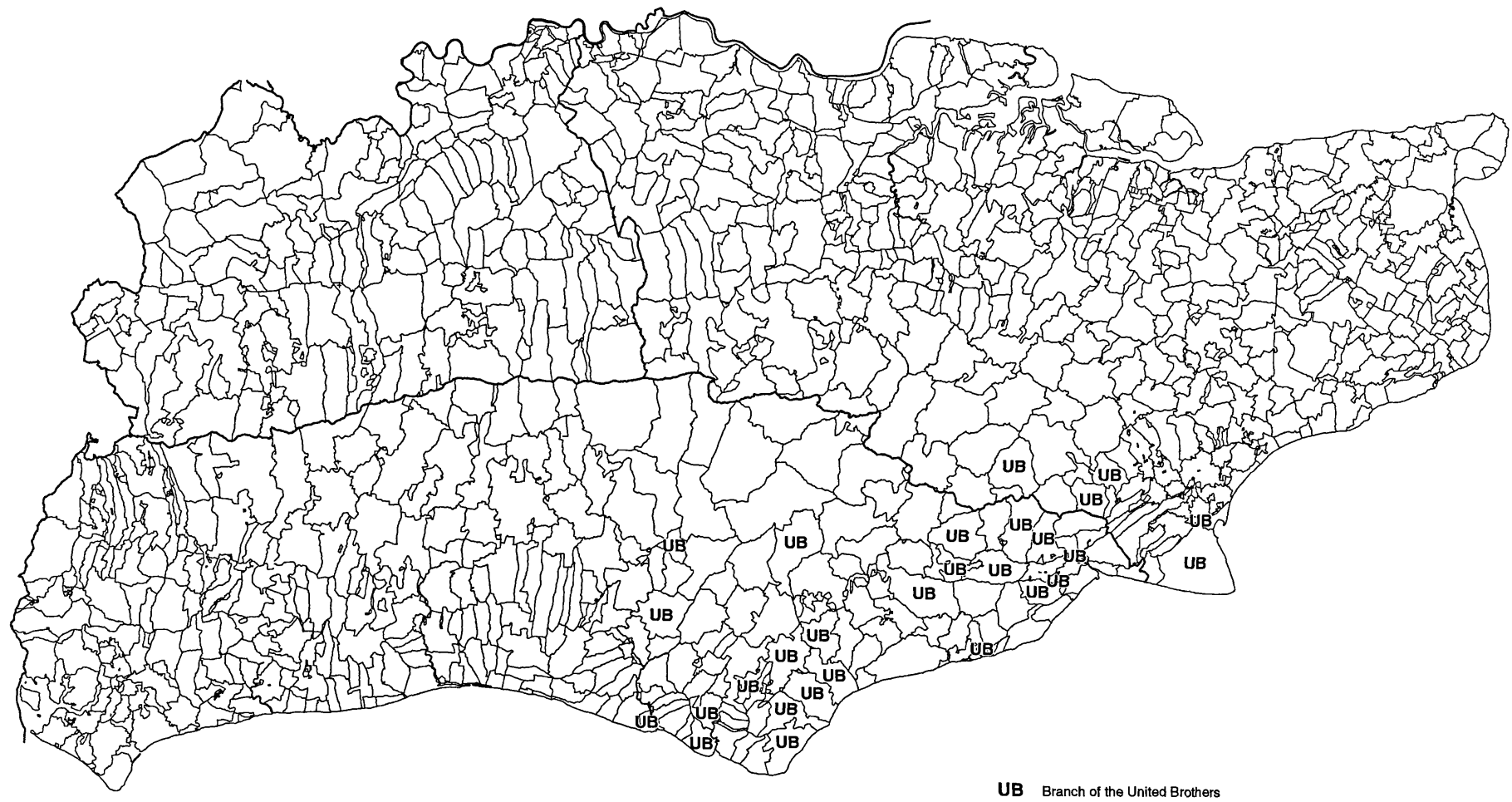
From these already impressive beginnings the Brothers soon capitalised on both recent reductions in wages and the rolling out of NPL Unions throughout East Sussex and the Romney Marsh. By late April the Union had 'acquired some strength' and had spread at least as far as Lydd where the formation of a branch had left the farmers 'very worried'. They accordingly met and resolved 'not to be bullied', all labourers enrolled in the Union were to be sacked and wage demands ignored.³⁰ The Union's strength, though, allowed the staging of several public mass meetings in late April and early May. The first, held at Jevington Holt on 26 April, was reportedly attended by 4-500 labourers, although this figure was debated among warring Sussex newspapers. Two delegates were appointed from each parish: assuming several members from each branch attended, the advance notice and planning needed to procure those from Lydd – over 30 miles away – attests a strong central organisation. The Eastbourne Union plan to separate wives from husbands was the first issue addressed, the meeting agreed that members separated from their families would be supported by the Union. The *Sussex Advertiser* rubbished the plan for, they claimed, the separation of the sexes was never planned; but in this heady atmosphere the gap between reality and perception was often of little consequence, something attested by the suicide of an old woman at Seaford who believed she was to be sent to the 'barracks'. Sussex press

²⁸ *Brighton Patriot*, 21 April. The *Sussex Advertiser* (4 May 1835) denied this, claiming the Eastbourne Board had never proposed such a measure.

²⁹ *Brighton Patriot*, 24 March and 5 May; R. Wells, 'Tolpuddle in the Context of English Agrarian Labour History 1780-1850', in J. Rule (ed.), *British Trades Unionism: The Formative Years 1750-1850* (London, 1988), pp.119-123; Wells, 'Resistance to the New Poor Law', p.103; *Kentish Observer*, 9 April 1835.

³⁰ See Map 3.4 for the location of all known branches of the United Brothers. *Kentish Gazette*, 28 April; *Kent Herald*, 30 April; *Dover Telegraph*, 2 May 1835.

Map 3.4: Location of all known Branches of the United Brothers, 1835



reports of the meeting speedily appeared in the *Times*, attracted by the propagandist possibilities of the *Brighton Gazette*'s claim that if the NPL was fully implemented 'we shall have something serious'.³¹

Fears for the safety of the Eastbourne Union Guardians led to the swearing of 57 special constables, most of whom were Coast Guards. The fears were well founded. The next (recorded) meeting of the Brothers in the Eastbourne Union actually occurred at the Eastbourne Workhouse on 11 May, the 300 or so who had gathered 'to do mischief' were soon repelled by the expectant civil force. The Brothers then proceeded to a chalk pit between Willingdon and Langney on the edge of Eastbourne. Thomas Maule, of Westfield, the representative of the Rye division of the Brothers, addressed the meeting in a 'powerful speech': members were 'to be peaceable and dispel any angry feelings towards their employers who were not...the sole cause of their distress', although they had not helped by returning members of parliament 'who were a problem', thereby linking the passing of the NPL to the failure of parliamentary reform. Whilst some of those present adjourned to the Lodge Inn near Langney, others repaired to Willingdon and that evening seized the relieving officer, after he had completed his duties, placed him in a cart and dragged him out of the parish. Warrants were issued the following day; 'they will be apprehended' reported a defiant Hawley to the Home Office.³²

By early May a new branch formed in Rye had already attracted 1,000 members and formed a 'fighting fund'. The branch held a public meeting on 2 May, following one at nearby Icklesham on 29 April, to which farmers were invited but with only one exception did not accept 'for fear of being ill-treated'. Antagonised by the concerted farmers' plan to discharge Union members, partially initiated by the politicking East Sussex Whig MP Herbert Curteis, the United Brothers approved a plan to initiate a general labourers' strike. Whilst the timing was unfortunate for farmers whose hop fields required intensive labouring during the period of rapid growth during early May, and therefore needed tying, Curteis realised that the United Brothers funds would not last the fortnight necessary to do substantial damage to the farmers.³³ On 6 May about 40 labourers who had been discharged from work for Union membership assembled at Rye and paraded with flags and banners, whilst partly a show of defiance against the lock-out, this was also a protest at the United

³¹ *Brighton Patriot*, 28 April; *Times*, 30 April and 1 May; *Brighton Herald*, 2 May; *Sussex Advertiser*, 4 May; *Kent Herald*, 7 May. The *Brighton Patriot* (5 May 1835) alleged that Hawley had ghost written the stinging attack on the *Patriot*'s reporting of the Jevington meeting that appeared in the *Sussex Advertiser*.

³² Rev. Henry Kelson, Eastbourne, to Lord John Russell, 8 May, enclosing list of special constables, H. Hawley, Battle, to PLC, 12 May, plus enclosures (forwarded to the Home Office), PRO HO 52/27, ff.159-162 and 163-7; *Brighton Patriot*, 12 and 19 May; *Brighton Herald*, 16 May; *Sussex Advertiser*, 18 May 1835.

³³ *Brighton Guardian*, 13 May; H.B. Curteis, Peasmarsh, to Phillips, 29 April and 1 May 1835, PRO HO 52/26, ff.122-125 and 127-9.

Brothers' inability to properly fund the strike.³⁴ The Union though was at the height of its powers and had extended well inland into Kent, with branches established at Stone and Appledore amongst other Kent parishes but the lock-out was effectively enforced by the local farmers and drained the financial resources of the Union. Attempts to organise a further meeting at Rye for 16 May were also frustrated by the combined efforts of the farmers and the judiciary. Handbills 'requesting all agricultural labourers to attend a general meeting...to hear [the] opinion of the London and Birmingham Unions on the Poor Laws Amendment Act' was widely posted but was quickly countered by a handbill issued by the magistrates of New Romney, Lydd and Romney Marsh and posted over the Marsh and as far as Saltwood and Hythe warning labourers about attending such meetings. In the end this triumphant meeting attracted only 200 men and women, it being widely known that a military detachment from Dover would be in attendance along with special constables and several London police.³⁵

Despite the optimism of the *Brighton Patriot* and the expanding net of 'labourers' lodges', from Seaford to Dover - in early July a meeting was reported as far West as Pulborough, the true extent, however, of the Union's activities will never be known - even the leaders of the erstwhile Eastbourne Lodge resignedly believed no good would come from their efforts due to the 'hand of tyranny' raised against them. The Rye Lodge was no longer gaining strength but was still engaged in sending 'emissaries' into the countryside in attempts to 'spread the society' but the lockouts marked the beginning of the end for the Union, and a shift from open to covert protest, with farmers enforcing the lockout being notable sufferers.³⁶ On the evening of 1 May women and boys went about Seaford breaking windows, a practice that continued into early July. Shots were fired by 'unionists' into the bedroom windows of Messrs. Smith and Farncomb at Icklesham. Arson, although denounced at a meeting of the Brothers at Pevensey on 22 May, again assumed a pivotal importance as *the* tool to attack the NPL. The first resort to incendiarism within the Newhaven NPL Union was at Seaford in early May when two cases occurred within four days. These fires were followed by notices threatening that the ponds would be poisoned, which in one at least one case was effected, with a further incendiary fire on a nearby farm occurring soon after.³⁷

³⁴ *Kentish Gazette*, 12 May 1835.

³⁵ Charles Sticks, Mayor of Rye, to Maule, 15 May, D. Denne, Lydd, to Russell, 9 and 14 May, plus enclosures, PRO HO 52/27, ff.172-3, 52/26, ff.149-151 and 167-169; *Kentish Gazette*, 12 and 19 May; *Kentish Observer*, 21 May 1835.

³⁶ *Brighton Patriot*, 2 June; Wells, 'Resistance to the New Poor Law', p.105; *Brighton Guardian*, 27 May; I. Thomas, Lewes, to Maule, 21 May 1835, PRO HO 52/27, ff.180-1.

³⁷ Rev. Carnegie, Seaford, to Russell, 7 July, PRO HO 52/27, ff.215-6; *Dover Telegraph*, 9 May; *Brighton Patriot*, 26 May; *Brighton Guardian*, 20 May; *Sussex Advertiser*, 6 July 1835.

Meetings of several lodges continued beyond the end of July, but were held against a toughened stance by farmers against the Brothers' activity so as to avert the threatened 'strike simultaneously throughout the county, if possible at harvest'. Moreover, lodges had also been infiltrated by spying London Police. Attendances were thin and those who attended were clearly frustrated, not least at Bodle Street Green where members and non-members came to blows. A meeting of the new Battle Board of Guardians on 25 July prompted a mass gathering of local lodges again headed by Thomas Maule, whose attempts 'to excite the Labourers to acts of Violence and to a resistance of the new Poor Laws' were deemed worthy of Government attention by Chairman Bellingham. To make their message clear those assembled, in a move reminiscent of Swing gatherings, handed to the Board a petition praying that labourers were given the chance to be able to 'live as they have hitherto done in their own humble cottages and in the Bosom of their Families'. Their pleas were ignored by the Guardians who would 'not hold communication with persons who are assembled illegally and for the evident purpose of endeavouring to intimidate'. The meeting followed the attempt by the 'lower orders' in several Battle Union parishes to remove the odious new relieving officers. The first attempt was made at Ewhurst on 20 July, the second the following day at Mountfield, where a more violent mob of 200 tore the same relieving officers' coat, and the third attempt to remove the same hapless employee of the Board on 22 July at Seddlescomb. In light of these disturbances several of Mountfield men were apprehended and warrants were issued for several others, whilst specials were sworn in an attempt to stop the planned Battle meeting. The Coast Guard were even to be stationed in readiness. After the Battle assemblage, which was thinly attended, for which Bellingham claimed the credit for his instituting of repressive measures, further specials were sworn in the neighbouring villages. Despite these further measures a second attempt was made a week later to lobby the Board, an attempt that was equally unsuccessful. Indeed, the anti-NPL stance of the Brothers was reason enough for the newly established Boards of Guardians to withhold relief from striking members, thereby, as Wells has noted, 'enhancing the new law's standing among thousands of previously antagonistic farmers'.³⁸

The United Brothers' involvement in disputes elsewhere in Sussex is unclear, but their defiance clearly showed that, at least in the short term, overt protest against the NPL was possible. Virtually all NPL relief policies provoked overt protests. Ringmer parish labourers, on being informed that they were to be relieved half in provisions and half in money, threatened Thomas Bull, the Chailey Union relieving officer, that they would 'have all money or blood for supper' for they had worked for money. Bull submitted to their

³⁸ Rev. J. Carnegie, Seaford, to Russell, 7 July; Charles Bellingham, Chairman of the Battle Board, to Russell, 26 July, PRO HO 52/27, ff. 215-6 and 212-3; *Brighton Patriot*, 14 July, and 8 August; *Sussex Advertiser*, 20 July 1835; Wells, 'Resistance', pp.102 and 105.

demands and was ceremoniously carted back to his native Barcombe for he 'had no business' at Ringmer. Nine days previously Bull had been followed by 30-40 labourers to the Board of Guardians meeting at the old Chailey poorhouse, who were anxious to ascertain the level of relief they were to expect having only received three days allowance the previous week. At the poorhouse they were joined by a further 20 people, the crowd remained peaceable throughout their day-long vigil and dispersed quietly.³⁹

Labourers from the West Firle Union on receiving half their allowance in provisions marched to Lewes to complain to an unsympathetic Bench. An early meeting of the Uckfield Board in May provoked a gathering 'of at least 100 paupers': the disturbance was 'trivial' but of such 'serious consequences' that police were sent to prevent a 'riot' threatened for the following day at Rotherfield. Nothing transpired, but the following week a menacing letter was posted to the door of Uckfield Church, the writer threatening to 'wash his hands in the blood' of a 'gentleman in authority in the parish'.⁴⁰

Riotous portents continued throughout the harvest. In West Sussex, arson attacks on Poor Law Guardians property were linked to attacks on relieving officers at Northchapel, near Petworth, and on gangs of Irish harvest labourers, such as near Horsham where a gang of local labourers re-appropriated their harvest tools for violent purposes. Most farmers dared not to employ Irish harvesters, most who did received 'dark threats' or suffered strikes by local labourers. The new Arundel Union generated resentment not just amongst labourers but also the displaced parish officers sufficiently for 'the safety of the approaching crops [to be] a subject of much apprehension'.⁴¹ So frequent were minor displays of public opprobrium over new relief arrangements, or increasingly over the poor quality of provisions given as relief, that the press and Boards of Guardians soon bored of reporting such events. Horsham labourers were said to 'seize every opportunity to manifest their discontent', whilst at Firle and Pulborough the 'greatest discontent' was said to exist amongst both labourers and other inhabitants. Riots, whilst seductive to historians, represent only the peak of the iceberg for a whole series of overt and covert actions that rarely ever left a trace in the archive.⁴²

IV: *The Implementation of New Poor Law Unions in Kent*

³⁹ *Brighton Patriot*, 19 May; *Brighton Herald*, 30 May; *Sussex Advertiser*, 1 and 8 June; Lewes Bench, to Russell, 29 May 1835, enclosing various depositions, PRO HO 52/27, ff.189-194.

⁴⁰ *Sussex Advertiser*, 1 June; H. Hawley, Battle, to PLC, 12 May, plus enclosures (forwarded to the Home Office), William Day, Maresfield, Phillips, 13 May, PRO HO 52/27, ff.163-7 and 170-1; *Brighton Patriot*, 19 May 1835.

⁴¹ *Sussex Advertiser*, 6 July; *Brighton Guardian*, 5 August; *Brighton Herald*, 18 and 25 July, 1 August; *Times*, 24 July; *Brighton Patriot*, 28 July 1835.

⁴² See Appendix 3.2. *Brighton Herald*, 1 August; *Brighton Patriot*, 15 September 1835.

In early 1835, before the piecemeal imposition of rural Poor Law Unions, covert protest in Kent assumed now traditional forms and roles. Arson continued as the weapon of choice for the Kentish poor. Parish officers continued to be frequent victims and parish labourers often the instigators. The firing of a corn stack belonging to Mr. Vincent, the Harrietsham overseer, in February was the result of several nights plotting by several 'loose characters' in parish pubs. Clearly even traditionally covert protest forms had elements of overt protest and helped to create a platform for more open forms of resistance to the NPL. Whilst Kentish arson remained important throughout the first quarter of 1835, from the end of March to the end of June not a single case was recorded. This is striking as the 'end' of arson coincided with the imposition of Unions through much of East Kent. Indeed, there was a lag of over a month between implementation and the resumption of visible protests. This lag can hardly be attributed to reluctance to engage in overt protest, for post-Swing acts of overt protest remained a feature of Kentish rural life (see chapter 8). It seems likely the delay represented a probing and testing of the new structures. Besides, many early Kentish NPL Unions centred on old Gilbert's Unions where the transformation in social practices was less extreme.⁴³

Anti-NPL protests in Kent began in villages south of the Swale where Swing had first spread beyond East Kent and had effectively commenced the movement for higher wages across the whole of southern England (see chapter 3). These parishes were placed into the Hollingbourne, Milton and Faversham Unions, despite the almost universal opposition of ratepayers. Rev. Poore, so active in suppressing Swing, was a vocal and respected critic of the Act and no sooner had he been appointed chairman of the Milton Board, Sir Francis Head's attempt to silence Poore, then he resigned.⁴⁴ Initially popular protests were triggered by new modes of outdoor relief. On 30 April attempts by a Milton Union relieving officer to offer tickets, to be exchanged with local shopkeepers, to Bapchild labourers was met by a premeditated assemblage of labourers armed with sticks and bludgeons. The relieving officer, assisted by the Bapchild overseer, was forcibly expelled from the relief room and his papers, including the hated tickets, were ripped to shreds. Three ringleaders were later taken into custody, and on 1 May appeared before the Sittingbourne Bench meeting at the Lion Hotel. In a move reminiscent of high-Swing, a large body of their 'companions' gathered outside the Lion, forced their way into the justice

⁴³ See Appendix 3.2. *Maidstone Journal*, 17 February; *Kentish Gazette*, 19 February 1835.

⁴⁴ *Kent Herald*, 19 March; *Kentish Observer*, 19 March; D. Hopker, *Money or Blood*, (privately printed, Broadstairs, 1988); P. Hastings, 'The New Poor Law 1834-1914', in N. Yates, R. Hume, and P. Hastings (eds.), *Religion and Society in Kent, 1640-1914* (Woodbridge, 1994), p.160. A meeting of 'rate payers and parishioners' at Sittingbourne after the imposition of the Milton Union to give

room and demanded the immediate release of the prisoners, otherwise they would 'wreak their vengeance on the Magistrates'. Fearful for their safety the magistrates complied.⁴⁵

Capitulating to the mob's demands demonstrated the efficacy of overt protests to other local labourers, who then established a 'regular system' of communication between parishes to facilitate mass protests at short notice. Protests at Bredgar on 2 May were only averted by the attendance of Poore and several special constables. More predictably a rumoured meeting of labourers at Doddington on 4 May did occur. Between 200 and 500 persons, 'many perfect strangers' who had attended 'by Invitation', led by the so-called 'Major' Murton, gathered at the workhouse and after the relieving officer had finished distributing relief the invitees assumed control and compelled the Doddington poor to return their tickets. News of the fracas soon reached Poore, who along with General Gosselin and another magistrate, immediately repaired to Doddington, but their attempts to convince the crowd that the new mode of relief was sanctioned by the new law fell on deaf ears. Relying on their local knowledge that no Unions had been formed in West Kent, they insisted 'that if it was the law it would extend to West as well as East Kent + indeed all over England': whereas the local poor perceived the Act as unique to them, an understanding manifest in their labelling it: 'The Law of Sittingbourne'. Protests in this part of Kent should be seen as concerted attempts by the labouring poor to assist each other in the universal maintenance of their [Elizabethan] 'rights'.

The intervention of Poore's civil force antagonised the 'strangers' who instead of dispersing proceeded to secure the workhouse, issuing an ultimatum to the officials that unless the Doddington poor were relieved entirely in cash they would remain incarcerated. After a lengthy siege, during which they cried out 'no tickets, no bread', and chalked 'kill' on the workhouse door, and clubbed members of the crowd attempting to leave, the 'strangers' decided to allow the Doddington people 'to settle it themselves', although they would stay by the door 'to see they were righted'. The relieving officer successfully offered the most minor of conciliatory gestures: further relief to those with large families on application, and a promise he would raise their complaints before the Board at their meeting on Friday. The captives were then released but were subjected to the hooting and hallowing of the 'strangers', 100 of whom followed them towards Newnham with the intention of finding 'a pond to give the bastard a ducking'. The tenacity shown at Doddington dissolved at Newnham, where relief was given exclusively in money.⁴⁶ The

voice to their disapproval 'of a measure which takes from them the control of their own affairs': *Kentish Gazette*, 21 April 1835.

⁴⁵ Rev. Poore, Murston, to Russell, 3 May, PRO HO 52/26, ff.130-31; *Kentish Gazette*, 5 May; *Kent Herald*, 7 May; *Rochester Gazette*, 12 May 1835.

⁴⁶ Poore, Murston, to Russell, 3, 5, and 6 May, PRO HO 52/26, ff.130-31, 131-33, 135-37; *Kentish Gazette*, 12 May; *Times*, 4 and 5 June; *Dover Telegraph*, 31 October; Hopker, *Money or Blood*, pp.7-10. The *Maidstone Journal* (12 May 1835) claimed the intention of the crowd was to demolish

same day a minor disturbance occurred at Upchurch, where the relieving officer had already resigned under pressure.⁴⁷

Whilst not condoning the actions of the Doddington rioters, Poore was slow to condemn and furious at the 'irregular' intervention of Head into the affray. Poore accused Head of 'gross and scandalous libel' in claiming that Poore and Gosselin had acceded to the crowd's demands and were subsequently cheered. The disagreements between Poore and Head degenerated into a very public slanging match, even drawing in Home Secretary Lord John Russell. Problems also occurred in the attempts to procure the services of special constables: 'I do not believe we shall get one in twenty to attend', Poore informed Russell, in the knowledge that the NPL was 'disliked' by the farmers as well as the poor. Moreover, small shopkeepers actually urged on the poor, for fear of completely losing their trade, as all NPL provisions were to be procured by contract. So general was this phalanx of opposition Poore believed 'unless it is modified [it] will never be carried into Execution without compulsion'.⁴⁸ His analysis proved correct in the short term. Further assemblages occurred at Hernhill (where an attempt by 40 men to destroy the baker's cart carrying bread destined as relief was thwarted by the quick-thinking Hernhill guardian); Lynsted and Teynham (where again relief had to be given solely in money) on 5 May, Milton and Throwley on 6 May; Rodmersham on 7 May; and at Ospringe on 8 May; evidence the determination to restore the workings of the old Poor Law.⁴⁹

Poore's call for military assistance at Sittingbourne was approved, despite Head's belief that it was 'unnecessary to call out the military', and was central to the easy suppression of a 'most limited' assemblage at Milton most of the parties gathering there, turning back on learning of the military attendance. The Throwley disturbance was also easily dispersed (on the intervention of Lord Harris), but only after the relieving officer had been held captive in the poorhouse for five hours during which he was intimidated into offering much higher levels of relief than authorised to do.⁵⁰ Far more serious was the affray at Rodmersham the following day. The relieving officer, who had been twice detained that morning by a cordon of people at Murston, was due at Rodmersham to offer the same mixture of money and tickets as elsewhere. By noon Sir John Tylden, Poore's replacement as Chair of the Milton Union, arrived and noted that, in addition to those

the workhouse, something also alluded to by Mr. Bodkin, the prosecution's lawyer; witness statements do not mention any attempts to demolish the buildings though.

⁴⁷ Hastings, 'The New Poor Law', p.161.

⁴⁸ Poore, Murston, to Russell, 5 and 6 May, Francis Head, Canterbury, to Rt. Hon. J. Frankland Lewes, 10 May, Phillips, to Poore, 8 May 1835, PRO HO 52/26, ff.131-3, 135-7 and 158-163, 41/12, pp.205-7.

⁴⁹ Hopker, *Money or Blood*, p.11-2; Poore, Murston, to Russell, 6, 7 and 8 May, PRO HO 52/26, ff.135-7, 138-140 and 144-8; *Kentish Gazette*, 12 May 1835.

⁵⁰ Poore, Murston, to Russell, 5 and 6 May 1835, PRO HO 52/26, ff.131-3 and 135-7; Hastings, 'The New Poor Law', p.161.

waiting to be relieved, a further 30 people from Bredgar, Doddington and other parishes, were also in attendance armed with clubs and their faces blackened. Within half an hour their numbers had swollen to peak at 150. Tylden attempted to convince the crowd to disperse and make their complaints known locally. Most were civil and quiet but a handful were violent and used 'ripe' language. The relieving officer, flanked by the Rodmersham guardian and several major farmers, started to distribute relief, but as soon as the contentious tickets were given to individuals the crowd demanded their surrender. Mr. Matson, a farmer in attendance, determined to stop this, chaperoning one woman from the vestry. However, Major Murton insisted she gave up her ticket and in the ensuing fracas struck Matson, who along with his father was seized and repeatedly struck by the crowd. The resort to violence prompted Tylden to call on Poore to send in the military. However, before they turned up, a chaise-load of London police officers arrived, much to the chagrin of the crowd, who then attempted to overturn the chaise. When the troops arrived, assisted by Poore (who was struck 'more than once' with stones), Knatchbull and Harris, though, the crowd were efficiently dispersed with 24 arrests made. Twenty of the captives were committed to trial and dispatched the same evening to Canterbury Gaol under the protection of the Yeomanry – a measure necessary through such a 'disturbed district' - whom on arriving at Canterbury were pelted with stones.⁵¹

Such a dramatic intervention could not fail to subdue the rioters, especially considering several ringleaders had been captured. The final anti-NPL riot occurred the following day at Ospringe, where a large meeting had been planned but only a 'small body made an appearance...yesterday [having] put them off'. Four more protesters were arrested, three who had been present at 'every riotous meeting in the district', and two of whom were 'considered as leaders'. Further arrests followed and, although five rioters who had warrants issued against them fled the county, of the 53 rioters arrested, 39 were tried at the specially arranged East Kent Special Sessions in early June. Before the Sessions started, however, overt protest turned to covert protest when on the night of 9 May a mare of Mr. Ray, a Milton surgeon, had its throat fatally slashed. Mr. Ray, despite being previously 'well liked by the poor', had made himself noxious by assisting the Milton Union relieving officers during the week.⁵²

Anti-NPL protests occurred elsewhere in East Kent. Near Canterbury, probably at either Bridge or Blean, both locales where protests persisted throughout the post-Swing period (see chapter 8), stumps marked out for the new Union workhouse were all removed at night. In the vicinity of Dover, the most consistently troubled post-Swing location, there

⁵¹ Poore, Murston, to Russell, 7 and 8 May, enclosing Sir John Tylden, Milstead, to Poore, 7 May, PRO HO 52/26, ff.142-142a and 144-8; *Maidstone Journal*, 12 May; *Kentish Gazette*, 12 May 1835.

was, reported the *Kent Herald*, ‘much discontent among those likely to come under the operation of the New Poor Law’. Indeed Head remarked that ‘in no enemy’s country that we have seen have we ever encountered the churlish demeanour which these men, as one meets them in the lanes, now assume’. At Deal those incarcerated in the new Union workhouse, previously Deal parish workhouse, objected to the imposed change in their diet. Several ‘daring and determined characters’ attacked the new Guardian whilst he was accompanying a visitor on a tour of the house; both were badly bruised. Three of the attackers were later apprehended.⁵³ The proposed East Ashford Union was bitterly resisted by the ratepayers of the 22 parishes who organised a public meeting at Ashford ‘to discuss petitioning against forming a Union so objectionable to [an] influential and numerous portion of ratepayers’. The outcome was a vote of 400 in favour with a derisory three votes against the petition. Despite the overwhelming vote, no discernible plebeian protest was manifested against the Union’s imposition in June, perhaps unsurprisingly in light of the almost total failure of the area to ‘rise’, except at the behest of outside gangs, during Swing, and partly due to the influence of the United Brothers having spread at least to the Union’s fringes. Ratepayer opposition had fallen away by late summer, not least amongst farmers, one of whom undertook to survive on the workhouse dietary for a month and found that it was more than adequate to his needs, thereby converting him from an outspoken critic to a public supporter of the NPL.⁵⁴

West Kent Unions, centring on Sevenoaks and Penshurst, were also put into operation before the harvest, the latter provoking almost immediate protest. On 24 May labourers gathered at the new Union workhouse site in Chiddingstone and in a ‘disorderly’ manner pulled up the surveyors stumps. The crowd then dispersed but threatened to meet again the next day, if necessary, when they would be assisted by 500 more people from the neighbouring East Grinstead Union. The military were sent as a precaution but nothing transpired. These events convinced Henry Streatfield, the Chairman of the Union, that the building of a ‘workhouse on such a scale so far from the protection and assistance of the town’ where 200 paupers ‘might for a time carry all before them’ was bound to be troublesome.⁵⁵ Streatfield’s concerns would later prove justified. On three successive Sundays in January 1836 ‘the populace from the neighbouring villages had assembled to the numbers of 300+ and threatened to demolish the new Union workhouse’, fears of further assemblages drove A. Akers, a local magistrate, to call upon the Tunbridge Wells

⁵² Poore, Murston, to Russell, 8 and 9 May, PRO HO 52/26, ff.144-8 and 152-3. Hopker, *Money or Blood*, pp.20 and 23. *Kent Herald*, 14 May 1835.

⁵³ *Kent Herald*, 7 and 21 May; *Dover Telegraph*, 23 May 1835.

⁵⁴ *Kent Herald*, 28 May and 4 June; *Kentish Observer*, 25 May; *Rochester Gazette*, 25 August 1835.

⁵⁵ *Maidstone Journal*, 26 May; *Kent Herald*, 28 May; Henry Streatfield, Penshurst, to PLC, 31 May 1835, PRO MH 12/5315, cf. Hastings, ‘The New Poor Law’, p.162.

Yeomanry to be ready for dispatch at short notice. On Sunday 7 February a crowd, put at between 3-400 by Streatfield, again collected at the Chiddingstone Workhouse, which unironically bore an uncanny resemblance to a county gaol, and proceeded to throw stones at the hated building, one of which, seemingly deliberately, struck the Governor. The Riot Act was read but an hour later the crowd remained, an express was sent to Brighton calling for the military to assist the ineffectual Yeomanry and (special) constabulary force. By the time the force had reached Penshurst they were informed the mob had dispersed. The following day the crowd reassembled and although no serious damage was inflicted the Yeomanry were pelted with stones, determining Tufnell - Head's replacement after he, like many labourers fleeing from the NPL, had emigrated to Canada - to capture the rioters 'to make an example for the rest'.⁵⁶

By removing the responsibility for the employment of the able-bodied poor from farmers, and reducing out relief payments including all relief-in-kind, the NPL pushed down labouring wages, something soon seized upon by East Kent farmers in further universal wage cuts. The farmers in the vicinity of Tonbridge adopted a different approach. Aware of the 'very dissatisfied' state of labourers, and the possibility of post-harvest incendiarism, farmers arranged a meeting at the house of a local magistrate where a wage scale based on the price of wheat, starting at 12/- a week with an extra 6d for every extra 5/- per quarter, was agreed. This private meeting also resolved to apply to tithe holders for reductions and to petition parliament.⁵⁷ Concerns over wages, the NPL and the employment of Irish harvest labourers prompted covert protests into the harvest period. The new pro-NPL Maidstone MP, John Wells, suffered the loss of his stack-yard after only employing Irish labourers in the hay harvest. Lord Templemore lost fifteen of the seventeen stacks on his Sundridge farm. It was no coincidence, claimed the *Gravesend and Milton Journal*, that he was 'involved in administering the New Poor Law'. Ash and Wingham farmers suffered a series of attacks: hops were cut; wheat trodden down; unripe canary seed cut; and in a particularly brutal attack four ewes and eight lambs' throats were cut. According to the *Kent Herald*, all were motivated by local popular hatred of the NPL. The Swale parishes were again affected; a Boughton farm owned by Lord Sondes sustained an extremely damaging incendiary fire, and the Harrietsham overseer, who refused the demand of a lame parishioner to receive relief of 3/- per week so as to avoid the workhouse, had his pond poisoned, killing ten horses.⁵⁸ Elsewhere hop and fruit farmers at Sutton Valence were

⁵⁶ Henry Streatfield, Chiddingstone, to Russell, 8 February, E. C. Tufnell, Chiddingstone, to Russell, 9 February, PRO HO 52/29, ff.345-6 and 348-9; *Kent Herald*, 11 February; *Kentish Gazette*, 16 February 1836; Hastings, 'The New Poor Law', p.162.

⁵⁷ *Kent Herald*, 11 June; *Dover Telegraph*, 20 June 1835.

⁵⁸ *Maidstone Journal*, 21 July and 18 August; *Rochester Gazette*, 15 September; *Gravesend and Milton Journal*, 11 September; *Kent Herald*, 25 June and 9 July 1835.

targeted in early June by plant maimers and farmers in the vicinity of Dover suffered repeatedly at the hands of sheep-stealers, one Whitfield farmer having two sheep stolen but a further three killed.⁵⁹

V: The Implementation of the Final South-Eastern New Poor Law Unions

After the harvest the Assistant Commissioners began implementing Unions in West Kent, East and West Sussex, and Surrey, provoking another phase of overt protests that persisted throughout the autumn and winter. An attempt in the Steyning Union to separate the children from their families was resisted by several men who refused to be moved to Henfield workhouse. Warrants were issued on 10 September against two of the men lodged in the Steyning workhouse, citing their 'misbehaviour and violent conduct' but were not enforced by the constable who could not get the men to leave the building. That night William Borrer, the chairman of the Steyning Union, had a barn on his Henfield farm set on fire. The following morning a civil force lead by HD Goring JP intervened to execute the warrants, but Borrer only aggravated matters by accepting one warrantee's challenge to a fight. Goring's violent intrusion instigated a full-scale brawl in the workhouse yard where stones and punches flew in all directions. Goring and his force finally managed to find sanctuary in the house where they were confined under threats of murder for three and three-quarter hours before military assistance arrived from Brighton. The protests went further; later that month Mr. Faulkener, a guardian of the Steyning Union, was only narrowly missed by a shot aimed at him whilst sitting at a window of his Henfield home.⁶⁰ Protests soon broke out in the neighbouring Horsham and Petworth Unions on 18 September; it was deemed necessary to send a detachment of Dragoons to Horsham in order to suppress the 'violent efforts...made by agitators to create disturbances', the *Brighton Herald* printed unsubstantiated reports that riots had broken out that day amongst labourers at Cuckfield, Horsham, and at Wisborough Green. The riotous potential in the Cuckfield and Horsham Unions was inescapable. A meeting of the Cuckfield Guardians coincided with the Petty Sessions on 21 November and was lobbied by 50 labourers from Worth and Ardingly armed with 'very fat sticks' complaining about a lack of employment and a consequent want of food.⁶¹ The plan of the Horsham Union to segregate different pauper types by workhouse similarly prompted a mass gathering of labourers at the Board of Guardians meeting on 16 December, although many of those present had been forcibly

⁵⁹ *Maidstone Journal*, 9 June; *Gravesend and Milton Journal*, 25 July 1835.

⁶⁰ H.D. Goring, Highdean, nr. Shoreham, to Russell, 13 September, PRO HO 52/27, ff.203-4; *Sussex Advertiser*, 14 September; *Brighton Patriot*, 15 and 22 September; *Brighton Guardian*, 16 September 1835.

pressed. Unlike at Cuckfield the confrontation did degenerate into violence with the guardians stoned on leaving the town. A further minor affray also occurred next day. So entrenched was the spirit of resistance that a military force was permanently stationed at Horsham, a repressive force assisted by Lord Surrey's popularly-hated West Sussex Yeomanry and several London Police. The plan to remove children from Horsham to the Shipley workhouse was finally achieved on 21 December by night, and under the protection of the Yeomanry. Simultaneous attempts to move children from Warnham were prevented by the reassembled masses, only to be achieved three days later under military escort with drawn swords through the troubled streets of Horsham.⁶² Repeated incendiary fires in the Midhurst Union during the summer continued into the winter, with Midhurst itself the scene of four fires in September alone.⁶³

Surrey was also the scene of riotous protests. The proposed Chertsey Union provoked labourers' protests on 23 September when 100 members of the 'peasantry' armed with great sticks invaded Byfleet and Wisley and held the Assistant Commissioner under siege in the Crown Inn, refusing to let the overseers take in their parish books. The blockade ended with a threat that they would return on Friday. Whilst this threat was not carried out, another gathering occurred the following Tuesday, when 150 labourers marched to Chertsey, forced entry to the room occupied by the Commissioner, expelled him and threw his papers into the street. Several participants were later apprehended. A fortnight after coming into operation the guardians of the new Windsor Union, uniting Berkshire and Surrey border parishes, agreed to segregate the poor by placing the old in Egham workhouse, the children in Sunninghill, and the 'females of bad character' in Clewer. The system was put into operation but was much resisted by the females.⁶⁴

The Romney Marsh Union, created despite the unanimous opposition shown at a packed public meeting held at New Romney where Head's statements 'appeared so unsatisfactory, as to render any questions unnecessary', generated a resort to arson, a new phenomena in the Marsh.⁶⁵ In North-West Kent the implementation of NPL Unions encouraged the farmers to reduce wages; this was met by labourers' strikes and a flurry of incendiarism. The persistence of incendiarism in the neighbourhood of Rochester

⁶¹ *Brighton Herald*, 19 September; *Times*, 21 September and 26 November 1835.

⁶² H. Stedman, Clerk to Horsham Bench, to Russell, 18 December, PRO HO 52/27, ff.193-4; *Brighton Patriot*, 29 December 1835; *Brighton Herald*, 16 January 1836. At the West Sussex Epiphany Quarter Sessions eight Warnham labourers were found guilty of riotous assembly. A Horsham shoemaker was also tried on a charge of spreading false and malicious reports concerning the treatment of children in the Shipley Workhouse: *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Sussex Advertiser*, 13 and 20 July; *Brighton Herald*, 3 October, Wells, 'Resistance to the New Poor Law', p.107. Also see Appendix 3.2. At Midhurst 'a sort of combination amongst the paupers', put up by the women, continuously harassed the authorities: *Ibid.*, p.100.

⁶⁴ *Surrey Standard*, 26 September, 3 and 30 October 1835.

⁶⁵ *Rochester Gazette*, 2 November; *Dover Telegraph*, 21 November; *Times*, 29 December 1835.

throughout 1835 led the Rochester Bench to bizarrely claim that they were not symptoms of labouring disenchantment but rather fires were lit as part of concerted 'plan to lure coastguards away from stations therefore enabling contraband to be landed'.⁶⁶ South-eastern incendiarism did indeed increase dramatically in 1835 compared to 1834, especially in Sussex. The increase rested solely in the second half of the year with a minimum of 39 recorded fires compared to sixteen in the previous year, whereas January to June 1835 represented a slight decline in incendiarism from 1834. That the 1835 harvest was better than that of 1834 means this increase can be attributed squarely to the implementation of the NPL. The ubiquitous nature of incendiarism attested its cultural resonance amongst labouring communities: that few labourers ever 'responded positively to the numerous massive rewards offered for evidence' was highly suggestive of community sanctioning of such fires. Moreover the commonplace refusal of crowds gathered at fires to assist in extinguishing the flames were effective acts of overt popular protest.⁶⁷

In the first half of 1836 the last south-eastern Unions were formed in Surrey, and although apparently not met by riotous opposition they generated considerable resistance. Plans to implement the Epsom Union provoked early protests with Rev. Heberden JP and Mr. Giles, a substantial farmer, both of Great Bookham, receiving letters threatening to set fire to their premises. The *Surrey Standard* had no doubt the letters were written in hostility to the NPL.⁶⁸ The Croydon Union was formed in early February and although it was technically implemented on 25 March non-communication by the PLC delayed its actual operation until the end of April, thereby causing 'much inconvenience' to the in-limbo vestries. Popular protest had already commenced, though, with a gang of disenfranchised young labourers engaged in a campaign of destruction of young trees and fences.⁶⁹

The Guildford Union was even more contentious. The ratepayers of Godalming were not opposed to the Union but threatened they would withhold their consent if they were not at the centre of it. Commissioners Walsham and Mott acknowledged the appeal, but at a meeting of the Guildford Council Chamber the following morning completely undermined any such claims, Mott stating that Godalming was 'one of the worst managed parishes he had ever seen', much to the amusement of the chamber. Any opposition to the

⁶⁶ Times, 26 November; *Rochester Gazette*, 13 October and 22 December; Messrs. Twopenny and Essell, Clerks to the Rochester Bench, to Russell, 24 December 1835, PRO HO 52/26, ff.118-9. Also see Appendix 3.2.

⁶⁷ For details of individual fires see Appendix 3.2. Wells, 'Resistance to the New Poor Law', p.107;

⁶⁸ *Surrey Standard*, 12 March 1836. The Epsom Union was operational from 31 May.

⁶⁹ *Surrey Standard*, 9 January, 13 February and 23 April. For Union imposition elsewhere in 1836 see: *Ibid.*, 4 (Kingston Union guardians chosen on 4 June) and 11 June (Richmond Union guardians chosen on 6 June), and 2 July 1836 (Dorking Union now in operation). No systematic work has yet studied the day to day role of the Assistant Commissioners after implementation, such a study would potentially offer a greater understanding of the way in which riotous protests were confined to the workhouse.

Act had no basis, claimed Mott, for all opposition to the act was because people did not understand it. Such statements did not stop popular protests. Colonel Sumner, an active magistrate, whose melon frames, hot house and vines were destroyed by 'some desperate fellows' in March 1835, on 17 February was subjected to an attack on his house, 19-20 large panes of glass were broken, two guns were fired into the bedrooms, and violent threats were inscribed on his garden wall. The same night Lord Onslow's dogs were poisoned, his park-gates and fences damaged, and his huntsman's bedroom was peppered with gunshots. The Guildford Bench, 'unwisely' in the opinion of Lord Arden, 'turned down the offer of help' (from the Home Office, in the form of London police officers and a military force) but were soon to regret their decision when during the night of 24 April Joseph Bull, a farmer at Shere, had thirty of his new fruit trees destroyed. Bull, it transpired, had been culpable of offering 'some offence in the discharge of his duties' as overseer in the past year. Rev. Paynter of nearby Stoke also lost a barn full of the new season's corn in early September to incendiaries.⁷⁰

The most dramatic of all Guildford Union protests occurred in early 1837, over half a year since the Union had first been operational. During a regular inspection of the Godalming workhouse the men, in protest against their diet, refused to give their names and were subsequently punished by having to subsist for a week on bread and water. The following day, at the behest of the women, they retaliated, stating that they intended to throw the house 'topsy-turvy' before proceeding to destroy the wooden divisions in the yard with bludgeons passed to them from outside of the house. Eight men were later arrested.⁷¹

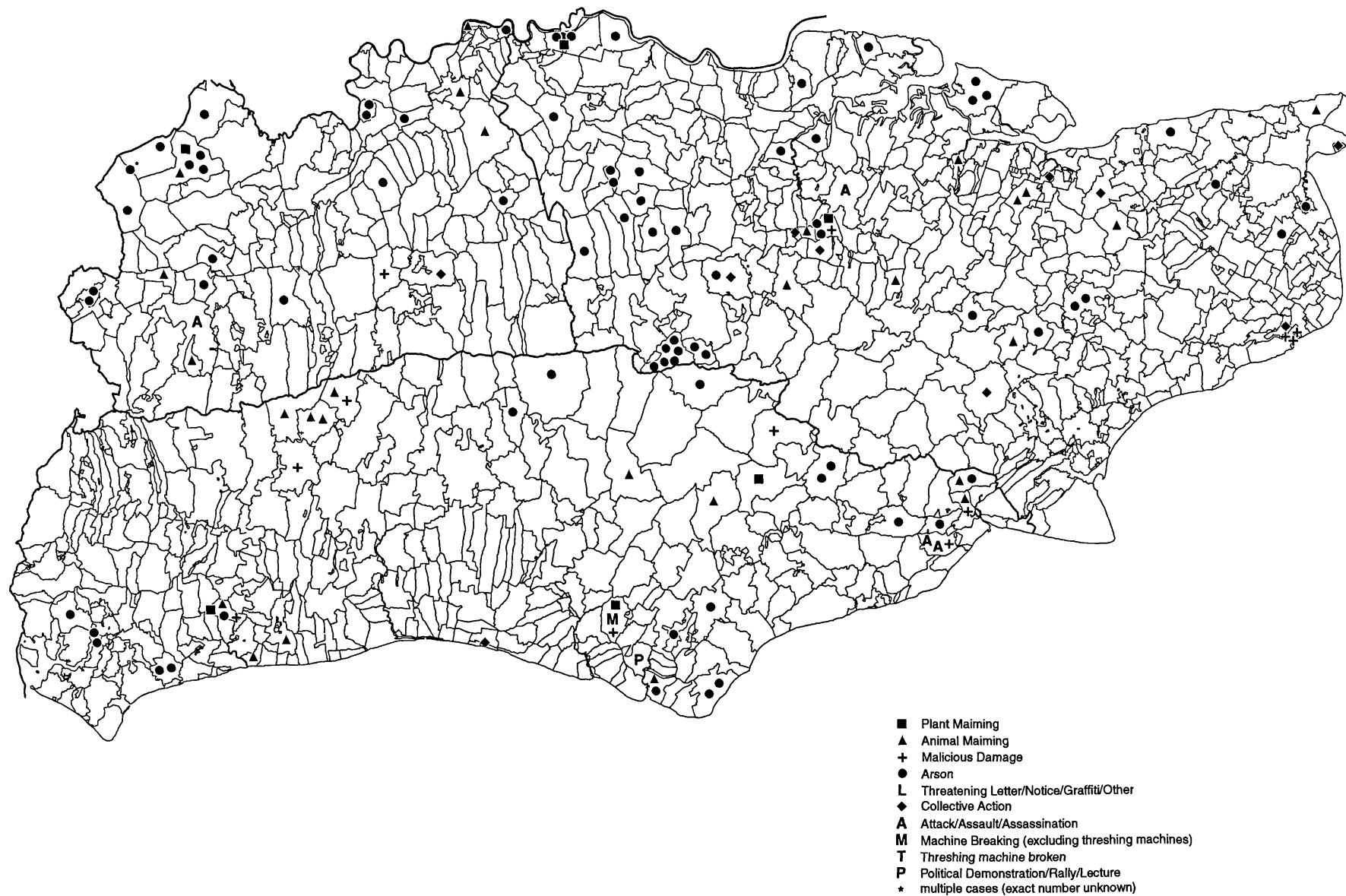
VI: *The Persistence of Protest against the 'Hated Bastilles'*

The Godalming disturbance was typical of most overt protests in the late 1830's. Workhouse disputes were two-a-penny and represented one of the most effective ways of challenging the system directly. Whilst parish workhouses had long been a source of resentment by the poor and a major target during Swing, the new expedients were far more castigatory than in even the most repressive Gilbert's Union workhouse. The separation of families provoked immediate protests but continued to play an important role as a 'deterrent'. Even the construction of single union workhouses did little to stop such protests

⁷⁰ *Surrey Standard*, 12 December 1835, 17 September 1836; Lord Arden, Nork, nr. Epsom, to Russell, 23 February and 25 April 1836, PRO HO 52/30, ff.512-3 and 518-20.

⁷¹ *Surrey Standard*, 7 January and 18 February 1837.

Map 3.5: Popular Protests, July 1836 to 1840



because of the universal policy of gender and age segregation. Strictly enforced workhouse security also effectively ruled out unscheduled visits by either friends or families.⁷²

Workhouse conditions generated most disputes, though: the poor quality and inadequate quantity of food in many Union workhouses engendered many rows; the utilitarian ideology behind making paupers work for their board was repeatedly challenged, and not only by the poor, and the conduct of workhouse governors was never out of the spotlight of the anti-NPL press. Trials involving workhouse disputes received in-depth publicity in the *Kent Herald* and the *Brighton Patriot* eager to expose both the harshness of the new regimes but also in protest at the PLC edict which forced Board of Guardians to meet in private. The anti-NPL movement also eagerly exposed the problems of unsanitary workhouse conditions allied to poor diets; extraordinary mortality levels in the West Hampnett Union workhouse prompted an investigation by the Poor Law Committee, whose conclusion that 'there was nothing so particular in the deaths as to induce the guardians to order the physician to attend' flew in the face of evidence that various fevers and diseases were rife, including typhus and dysentery. Moreover, at the height of the disease the Union was engaged in moving pauper children into the central workhouse from the other three disbanding workhouses in the union thereby knowingly, and unnecessarily, exposing otherwise healthy children to potential cross-infection. Further publicity was generated by inmates' testimonies which were given pride of place in the anti-NPL press. They highlighted how the ideological critiques of the NPL were not abstract but manifest in the *everyday* struggles of the working-class. The following letter was sent to the editor of the *Kent Herald*:

Sir, Knowing you to be not against advocating the rights of the poor, I have sent you a brief sketch of one of the Bastille Unions, which I have the misfortune to be in, after paying scot and lot, and never having before seen the inside of a jail for debt or for misdemeanour; but having a wife and many children, through the loss of employment I am compelled to come to this miserable place and be separated from my wife and family, and not even allowed to go and see her... They will not let me go out to try to get my family out of this bastille, which I, and my family for a hundred years and more, have helped to pay. Sir, I wish my countrymen knew this through the means of your valuable paper, and would consider they are paying rates to support prisons... Sir I am afraid I shall be forced to do something wrong and throw myself on the laws of my country – if I had committed felony I nor my wife could be treated worse.⁷³

⁷² See Chapter 3. *Times*, 13 July 1837. A classic case of the how harshly workhouse rules were applied was printed in the *Sussex Agricultural Express* (4 February 1837). Two men who had left an unspecified workhouse in the vicinity of Maidstone to visit their wives without seeking prior permission received summary gaol sentences: one receiving 21 days (the maximum sentenced under the NPL Bill) whilst the other man received seven days.

⁷³ *Brighton Patriot*, 8 December 1835 (Eastbourne riot); *Kent Herald*, 21 January (violent conduct in Blean Union workhouse); *Brighton Herald*, 27 February 1836 (East Sussex Quarter Sessions trial of Robert Poole, labourer, for assaulting William Cooper, relieving officer of the Cuckfield Union, at

The deterrent aspect of the workhouse should not be underestimated. The *Brighton Patriot* reported as early as November 1835 that paupers were turning to crime rather than letting their families be separated in the workhouses, that they 'do not hesitate to acknowledge by what means they exist' was a tacit recognition that for all the supposed rate savings made by farmers they were now subjected to the open plunder of their property. The resentment of labourers forced to steal to merely subsist was manifest in the frequent reports of thefts allied to animal and plant maiming, and malicious damage.⁷⁴ Unsurprisingly then crime rates were reported to have soared throughout the winter of 1835-6, a fact lamented by the Earl of Chichester who two years later in reporting another huge rise in crime to the East Sussex Quarter Sessions claimed 'it proves that demoralization to a frightful extent is going on among the bulk of the people of England' caused by 'poverty, the mother of crime'. The *Brighton Patriot* was no less forthcoming: 'The system pursued under the New Law is to manufacture paupers into criminals', a statement echoed by the *Kent Herald* sarcastically and rhetorically asking its readers whether the increased Assize calendar had anything to do with the NPL.⁷⁵ Such statements were especially resonant in light of the alleged comments of Assistant Commissioner Hawley, that by making workhouses 'as uninviting as possible...and by pursuing a very rigid system of economy...poverty is to be treated almost as a crime'. The labouring poor were criminals either way. Whether such comments reached the poor, and thereby further legitimised petty thefts, is a matter of some

Bolney); and 7 April 1838 (Case at East Sussex Quarter Sessions: Mary Tugwell, 18, threatened to 'tear his [workhouse governor] heart out'); *Kent Herald*, 8 March 1838 (attempt to put the governor in 'blackhole' of East Grinstead workhouse: 7-8 lads and girls were committed to Lewes House of Correction for three months, and were reportedly 'pleased at the idea of a change of air'); and 10 December 1840 (refusal of inmates to pick oakum in Milton Union, they were therefore brought before the Bench and given the maximum 21 days sentence, to be served in the Canterbury House of Correction); *Times*, 13 July 1837 (non allowance of visitors in Margate workhouse). The *Kent Herald* (13 June 1839) reported that the sick in the Coxheath Union workhouse were; one man had also died but his grieving uncle was turned away on arrival. Whilst in the Bridge Union (*Ibid.*, 12 April 1838) paupers were made to carry 56lb sand bags for 2-3 hours daily under the notion they were working for the food they receive. An appalled Sir Henry Oxenden, a local grandee, but a stop to such practices. For Westhampnett problems see: *Times*, 14 and 20 July 1837; and, *Brighton Patriot*, 19 April 1836. Also see Wells, 'Resistance to the New Poor Law', especially pp.99-100 and 108-110 for various detailed examples of workhouse disputes in Sussex.

⁷⁴ *Brighton Patriot*, 17 November 1835. For instance in early 1836 a crime wave was reported at Hailsham and Hurstmonceaux, one victim, farmer Woodhouse on 14 February had seven geese stolen, the following night he was awoken by a loud knock on his front door, not answering the call, the next morning he found the heads of seven geese suspended from the knocker on the door. A crime wave at Hernhill after the 1840 saw sheep, pigs, poultry, and potatoes stolen but also the tails and manes cut were from several horses. Mesdames Long and Schofield at Chipstead were burgled on 2 September and in early November had flints thrown through their windows. At Udimore in early 1838 the 'daring outrages' included sheep stealing as well as arson and attempted assassinations. See *Brighton Patriot*, 23 February 1836; *Kentish Gazette*, 27 October 1840; *Surrey Standard*, 14 November 1836; *Brighton Herald*, 3 February; *Kent Herald*, 8 February 1838.

conjecture, but it does seem likely that anti-NPL farmers would do all they could to paint themselves in a good light amongst their labourers so as to avoid becoming victims of covert protests or property appropriation. Part of this strategy was to paint a partial picture of the enemy. Indeed, many farmers' remained opposed to the act, and took every opportunity to resist its operation.⁷⁶

VII: *'The ways in which the boasted new system will finally break up'* ⁷⁷

An important part of the Act that despite attracting much parliamentary criticism remained unscathed was the plan to stop all out-relief on 1 July 1835. This clause, whilst obviously unpopular with rural labourers forced to petty theft or into the workhouse, proved to be equally obnoxious to many Boards, clergy and farmers. High construction costs were a huge factor in keeping workhouse capacities to a minimum, besides the Act was supposed to, by removing the crutch of parish support away from the feckless, lead to a more industrious and less work-shy labour force. However, their workhouses proved inflexible against the vagaries of agricultural cycles. The poor harvest of 1836 not only reduced harvest time employment opportunities but poor yields meant few threshers were required. Poor yields also forced the price of all provisions steadily higher throughout the autumn and winter, thereby reducing real labouring incomes. Evidence that Boards of Guardians responded by sanctioning out relief to labourers, despite the edicts of Somerset House, abounded. The Second Annual Report of the PLC even attempted to suppress such information, declaring that for the whole of England and Wales such practices had only occurred in the Petworth, Uckfield and Ticehurst Unions. The winter of 1836-7 was particularly harsh, heavy falls of snow over Christmas and the New Year not only stopped communications and killed thousands of sheep but also stopped all outside work. The East Grinstead Union workhouse was soon already over capacity, thereby forcing the Board to sanction out relief to those refused admission; rate-payers were said to be 'very angry' that their new workhouse erected at huge expense could not effectively relieve the poor.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Even the Mayor of Maidstone publicly declared that he believed the rise in robberies was attributable to the withdrawal of outdoor relief. *Brighton Patriot*, 3 and 17 November 1835, and 1 March 1836; *Brighton Herald*, 13 January 1838; *Kent Herald*, 10 and 31 March 1836.

⁷⁶ *Brighton Guardian*, 29 April 1835; *Brighton Patriot*, 20 December 1836. The support of many farmers to the labouring poor – for whatever reasons – was no where more graphically illustrated than at the Hailsham Cattle Show in December 1836; Dr. Breton gave a speech claiming that the NPL had 'tamed' the labourers, provoking hissing by the assembled farmers. The *Brighton Patriot's* comment that 'every agricultural labourer in East Sussex was insulted in the person of Dr. Breton...such feelings rankle in every labourer's mind' was an admission that, through itself and other means, such comments did reach the labouring classes.

⁷⁷ Quote from *Kent Herald*, 2 June 1836.

⁷⁸ *Brighton Patriot*, 27 December; *Kent Herald*, 2 June, 11 August and 17 November; *Gravesend and Milton Journal*, 1 October 1836; *Times*, 2 and 21 January, 16 February 1837.

Each subsequent winter in the late 1830's put similar pressures on Boards to allow out relief. 1837-8 saw the PLC and their provincial subordinates take an even harder line on outdoor relief, issuing blanket refusals to all Board requests. Whilst some Kentish Boards effectively ignored official policy, the dogmatism of the PLC in the face of extremely adverse conditions for rural labourers did attract the attention of several grandees, who supported and sponsored petitions calling for greater discretionary powers to be awarded to Boards, and a coterie of magistrates who met in private to consider what action to take against non-out-relieving Boards.⁷⁹ Refusals to permit out relief during the winter of 1838-9 again prompted widespread defiance and bad publicity in the local and national press.⁸⁰

Other forms of subterfuge were also practised. Parish vestries made 'voluntary' rates to, in the words of the Elham vestry, 'relieve the many causes of distress arising from the harsh operation of the New Poor Law'. 'This is one of the ways in which', optimistically reckoned the *Kent Herald*, 'the boasted new system will finally break up'. Other practices were also adopted throughout the late 1830's; the long civic history of winter time subscriptions to provide soup and coals was reinvigorated in many south-eastern towns; soup was also distributed by Boards of Guardians to the out poor; and vestries contrived to set minimum wages, no doubt out of a combination of genuine concern for labouring families and a fear of covert protests. The most persistent form of non-Union assistance was the continuation of employing the unemployed on the roads, financed not through a poor rate, now an illegal practice, but by a highway rate. The Ashford vestry in February 1839 expressed 'much dissatisfaction' at the operation of the NPL and upon the production of a list of the unemployed resolved to allow the surveyor a rate: 'surely no reasonable man can require a stronger proof of the inefficiency of the New Poor Law than it should require such a subterfuge as this to assist its working'. The universality of similar subterfuges led one Thanet farmer to proclaim 'the highways have become the workhouse'.⁸¹

A meeting of the Sundridge Vestry in November 1842, to consider high unemployment, following a poor harvest, typified the problems faced by parish schemes. The favoured plan of Rev. Dr. D'Oyley to 'persuade' the unemployed to emigrate received

⁷⁹ *Dover Telegraph*, 17 February; *Kent Herald*, 20 February 1838 and 8 August 1839. In Sussex fears were raised that the repression of out relief was forcing farmers to employ extra men engaged in unnecessary work at an unaffordable cost: *Brighton Herald*, 3 March 1838.

⁸⁰ *Kent Herald*, 29 November and 13 December 1838, 8 August; *Sussex Agricultural Express*, 19 January 1839.

⁸¹ *Kent Herald*, 2 June, 11 August, and 17 November 1836, 20 December 1838, 7 February 1839; *Gravesend and Milton Journal*, 1 October; *Brighton Patriot*, 27 December 1836; *Times*, 2 and 21 January 1837, 19 January 1841; *Sussex Advertiser*, 30 January 1837, 22 January 1838, 11 January 1841; *Brighton Herald*, 13 and 20 January 1838; *Kentish Gazette*, 1 January 1839; *Sussex Agricultural Express*, 5 and 12 January, and 23 February 1839, 16 January 1841; Wells, 'Resistance to the New Poor Law', p.123.

short shrift. Earl Stanhope opposed such a plan when there was uncultivated land in the parish; instead he favoured a labour rate. The farmers objected on the basis that labour rates had been tried elsewhere but 'never really worked'. D'Oyley then proposed that, as the NPL had forced down the poor rates, the farmers should employ the poor 'in proportion to this reduction': the farmers sharply retorted that any savings had been counterbalanced by increases in his tithes. Some farmers instead put forward the idea that the labourers should be employed on the roads, a scheme rejected for the roads were already very good. In the end with no compromise possible, the 'nobility and gentry' took it upon themselves to employ the men tilling the uncultivated land.⁸²

VIII: '*One universal determination to resist*'?⁸³

The almost total confinement of overt anti-NPL protests to Union workhouses from the second half of 1836 was mirrored by a decline in the level of incendiarism. The fifty or so cases of 1835 became a mere 22 cases in 1836 declining yet further to a paltry twelve cases in 1837 before settling at roughly twenty cases per year until 1842 when the level began to fluctuate wildly from year to year. This late 1830s decline, mirroring events in East Anglia where 'incendiarism almost completely ceased', did not represent a grudging acceptance of the workings of the NPL, rather a grudging recognition that rural terror was unlikely to prevent the workings of the Act. Guardians, and overseers, continued to the victims of arson, and other forms of covert protest. The hated Bastilles were not immune either; a gorse stack in the grounds of the Eastbourne workhouse was fired in January 1836, leading to the arrest of two male inmates. The incarcerated poor were immediately believed to have been the perpetrators of an arson attack in October 1838 on Eastbourne Guardian Joseph Fielder's farm at Southbourne, a protest motivated by low wages and the high price of bread.⁸⁴

The majority of covert protests were not, apparently, targeted at those associated with the NPL. Most victims of arson continued to be farmers, and that all areas besides south-east Surrey suffered at the hands of the incendiary between 1835 and 1840 meant that no farmer could assume immunity. Several areas were more prone than others though.

⁸² *Sussex Agricultural Express*, 26 November 1842. Similar problems were encountered at St. Leonards in East Sussex. A meeting held to consider the creation of a fund to employ labourers with settlements over the *summer* in repairing footpaths and roads was opposed by the overseers and guardians, instead the poor were left to 'their own resources and the union-houses'. This was apparently the first case of opposition to such a scheme in 'that part of the county'. *Ibid.*, 6 January 1844.

⁸³ Quote from: *Brighton Herald*, 17 February 1838.

The parishes between Seaford, Hailsham and Eastbourne were scarred at least thirteen times. Farmers on the north Kent coast from Chalk to Hoo were repeated sufferers, The *Times* quick to point its campaigning finger at the NPL.⁸⁵ Detested plantations upon the heaths and wastes, central to the economic welfare of local plebeian households, at Bagshot and Chobham were, year after year, targeted by incendiaries, and during the spring of 1840 were set ablaze no less than fifteen times.⁸⁶ The NPL meant that wherever wastes and commons existed they became economically more important than ever to the poor, not least to those forced out of expensive rented accommodation and into squatters' shacks. The eviction of squatters from wastes and commons was central to at least two major outbreaks of rural protest. Encroachments over several years had almost totally enclosed the lower part of Woodchurch Common, prompting Lord Deedes, the Lord of the Manor of Aldington, to inform all 'trespassers' that they had to enrol their claims or their buildings would be demolished. Deedes' demands, though, were met by a blanket silence. Writs were therefore issued but upon the attempt to enforce them a mob in excess of 100 men and women gathered and used physical force to resist the plan. The other outbreak occurred in the vicinity of Haslemere in West Surrey. Attempts to evict cottagers squatting upon the common were bitterly resisted through a campaign of covert protests; Mr. Fielding, who had instigated ejections, suffered twenty sheep to be maliciously killed, and his associate, Mr. Baker of Frensham Hall, narrowly survived an assassination attempt, one shot grazing his arm. James White, a young cottager, was subsequently arrested but was acquitted at the 1839 Surrey Summer Assizes.⁸⁷

Machines and manufactories continued to be important post-Swing targets, not least mills which in light of high corn prices were frequent and symbolic targets.⁸⁸ A plan to destroy hand-mills used to punitively employ the poor in the Hailsham Union workhouse was uncovered; the mills were taken down and placed into storage before being erected in

⁸⁴ See Appendices 3.2 and 2.2. Archer, *By a Flash and a Scare*, p. 106; *Kent Herald*, 28 January; *Maidstone Journal*, 16 August; *Rochester Gazette*, 17 May; *Sussex Advertiser*, 1 February 1836 and 5 November 1838.

⁸⁵ *Kentish Gazette*, 20 January and 3 February 1835, 17 May 1836, 10 and 31 October 1837, 28 January 1840; *Maidstone Journal*, 3 March 1835, 3 and 10 October 1837; *Rochester Gazette*, 13 October and 22 December 1835, 17 May 1836, 13 March 1838; Twopenny and Essell, Rochester, to Russell, 21 May 1836, PRO HO 64/6, ff.198-9; *Times*, 3, 4 and 5 October 1837; *Kent Herald*, 5 October 1837.

⁸⁶ For heath fires see: *Times*, 27 July 1835 (though supposedly an accident) and 3 June 1840; *Surrey Standard*, 14 March 1838 and 8 May 1840; E. Croy and E. Owens, Bagshot, to Russell, 20 May 1839, plus enclosures; Snell, Curry, and Owen, JPs, Windlesham, to Russell, 14 May and May 1840 (no specific date), PRO HO 64/9, ff.91-3, 64/10, ff. 145 and 146-7. For local farm fires see: *Surrey Standard*, 24 February 1838 and 26 January; *Sussex Agricultural Express*, 13 April 1839. For 'plant maiming' in the plantations see: *Ibid.*, 25 January 1840.

⁸⁷ *Rochester Gazette*, 24 July; *Kent Herald*, 26 July 1838. *Surrey Standard*, 22 March and 9 August 1839.

the Hellingly workhouse. Although no cases of threshing machine destruction were reported in the late 1830's, at least four threshing machines were destroyed in three separate fires between 1836 and 1840. A Hurst Green manufactory of agricultural and rural industrial machinery was twice the victim of incendiarism after the harvest in 1837. Ploughs and other agricultural implements were also maliciously destroyed, one case at Icklesham in August 1840 followed 'numerous depredations'.⁸⁹ The villages surrounding Icklesham were perpetually disturbed; from the decline of the United Brothers local labourers showed themselves not averse to using the tools of rural terrorism. Such activity peaked in 1838: farmer Woodlands one January night had four sheep stolen, the following night his barn was fired; these, and other 'daring outrages', prompted the dispatch of two London policemen. Two men were soon arrested on a charge of arson by the Rev. Richards who, for his efforts, was subsequently targeted by rural snipers: however a lack of evidence meant that both men had to be released without trial. An unresolved hop picking dispute⁹⁰ at Brede that October ended with the parsimonious Mr. Bourne's oat stack on fire, although the perpetrator, a 23 year-old labourer, allegedly claimed 'he would set a stack on fire, or steal a sheep or duck or something for his supper', presumably choosing arson as the best possible way of achieving his other stated goal, to be transported. Meanwhile the area had played host to several early Chartist meetings, the missionaries apparently proclaiming that if labourers cannot 'get their grievances redressed, they are justified in taking the produce of their richer neighbours'. A spate of thefts soon followed, the repercussions being that Sussex farmers were now extremely hostile to the Chartist movement.⁹¹

IX: *The New Poor Law and Popular Politics*

The politicisation of the rural poor in the post-NPL world had deep roots, extending back to the radicalism of the 1790's. However, that the NPL had been implemented by the first post-Reform Bill Parliament was damning proof that, in Wells' words, 'post-1832

⁸⁸ *Maidstone Journal*, 15 February 1836 (Margate: arson); *Surrey Standard*, 20 January 1838 (Warlingham: arson, but a few days before the mill was also maliciously damaged); *Brighton Herald*, 20 June 1840 (Billingshurst: water mill flashes removed).

⁸⁹ *Brighton Patriot*, 23 February; *Rochester Gazette*, 17 May 1836 and 17 September 1839; *Kentish Gazette*, 10 and 17 September; *Sussex Advertiser*, 7 October; *Times*, 7 October 1839; *Sussex Agricultural Express*, 11 February; *Kent Herald*, 19 October 1837 and 6 August 1840. See also *Gravesend and Milton Journal* (5 March 1836) for an arson attack on a Deptford carpet factory.

⁹⁰ Expanding hop acreages meant that work in hop fields was more economically important to plebeian households than ever, whilst riots between English and Irish hop-pickers were seemingly scarce wages remained a source of potential friction, with arson and hop maiming frequently deployed against hop farmers. See: *Sussex Advertiser*, 30 May 1836 and 4 September 1837; *Times*, 8 and 13 October 1838; *Kent Herald*, 12 September 1839.

⁹¹ *Sussex Advertiser*, 12 February, 8 and 15 October; *Brighton Herald*, 3 February 1838 and 23 March 1839; *Dover Telegraph*, 10 February; *Kentish Gazette*, 20 November 1838.

parliaments were no more responsive to proletarian demands than their predecessors', a popular analysis reinforced by the failure of the 1835 and 1837 parliaments to at least modify the operation of the Act. The NPL had for the first time exposed all working-class lives to the direct machinations of government: that the popular reaction was not just to openly and covertly protest but also to turn to popular politics is crucially important for it shaped the experiences of southern radicalism for decades to come. The failure(s) of reform provided a platform from which an already vibrant south-eastern radicalism could rally,⁹² a crucial element of which was the publication of the *Brighton Patriot*, an ultra-radical weekly newspaper published from 24 February 1835 which gave a public voice for the first time to the aspirations and politics of working-class southerners. The *Brighton Patriot* was soon followed by the *Greenwich, Woolwich and Deptford Patriot*, a weekly news journal, first published on 28 October 1837, dedicated to the 'fearless' assertion of the rights of the people. Whilst both papers were short-lived, they were central to shaping the working-class political movement in the south-east, not least as in the case of the *Brighton Patriot* many agricultural labourers were readers, a fact made ultra-vivid by the Uckfield guardians actually authorising the governor of the workhouse to inspect and censor 'all Newspapers... delivered... for the paupers'.⁹³ This important new platform helped provide cohesion to south-eastern radicalism by highlighting at every opportunity the universality of working-class experiences in the post-NPL world. The extension of the vote to the middle classes had produced greater oppression – 'even the petty employer of a single labourer has been known to exert his authority for the purpose of corrupt influence', noted a far-from-radical but still concerned *Brighton Herald*; the nepotism of the NPL had been exposed by the scandals over the refusal to let Brooker onto the Eastbourne Board; Boards had failed to assert themselves for the benefit of their poor against the might of Somerset House despite their post-paternalist posturing; and the total failure of MPs to pass even limited progressive reforms to the Act all acted to help mould a genuinely working-class political consciousness. Policies such as universal (male) suffrage, vote by ballot, and annual parliaments gained popular support precisely because of working-class experiences of the intervention of elite politics into everyday life. This expanding constituency generated a sufficient degree of confidence for Lewes radicals to attempt to organise a grand meeting of

⁹² Wells, 'Resistance to the New Poor Law', p.116. In Kent at least Working Men's Associations had been established by August 1834 when a meeting at Margate of delegates from branches at Maidstone, Chatham, Canterbury, Dover, Deal and Hythe were present: *Kent Herald*, 21 August 1834. See also chapter 8. However, at least at Hythe the 'Reform Union' was disbanded in 1834 due to declining interest, something the *Dover Telegraph* (8 March 1834) attributed 'to the growing sense and better feelings of those with whom it originated' against vote by ballots, annual parliaments, obliteration of the national debt and 'renovation of the universe'.

⁹³ Wells, 'Resistance to the New Poor Law', p.112.

their Southern comrades.⁹⁴ Reform Unions and Societies initially satiated by the Reform Bill became increasingly vociferous in their calls for further more embracing parliamentary reform and became early and enthusiastic signatories and missionaries for the People's Charter.⁹⁵

From the moment the NPL was passed it was used as a political weapon. At the Maidstone election in January 1835 Mr. Wyndham Lewis, the Tory candidate, called for the repeal of the NPL, 'a hateful piece of legislation' that treated paupers like criminals.⁹⁶ Politicking prospective parliamentary candidates in the 1835 election inevitably were forced by rowdy hustings crowds to air their views on the NPL, and in the old borough seats strong radical factions made sure the NPL remained the central issue. Indeed, during the 1837 general election radical candidates standing on anti-NPL platforms, including Cobbett's son at Chichester and Tory-Radical hybrid Disraeli at Maidstone, polled respectably. Tory hostility to the NPL was, despite the obvious benefits of advocating at least limited repeal of the new statutes, only manifest in the fragmented and uncoordinated opposition of individual candidates. Early Tory electioneering in East Sussex, focusing on the 'inhumanity and slavery' of the NPL which the Whig *Brighton Herald* blamed for legitimating the mass meetings of the United Brothers, was essentially an attempt to wrong foot the sitting MP Curteis, but Darby, his Tory opponent who took his East Sussex seat in the 1837 general election, by the time of the Lewes Cattle Show in December 1835 had been converted to the Act. As the *Kent Herald* astutely observed, the Tories might attack the NPL to win votes but any opposition was farcical when such senior figures as Knatchbull, Peel, Wellington, and Winchelsea supported it. 'The act is Tory all over', they would never repeal it because it was 'too close to their own principles'.⁹⁷

It was the election of guardians though that provided the first opportunity for politics to actually shape the implementation of the Act. Whist parliamentary support for the NPL was not divided on party lines, 'party spirit' was said to be running high at Lewes over the election of guardians. Ideologically driven opposition to the Act by Chichester radicals was augmented by townsfolk of all political colours at pains to preserve the autonomy of the pre-existing Chichester Board of Guardians. This united, but fragile, resistance was ignored by the PLC, thereby deepening hostility to the proposed Westhampnett Union: a plan was hatched to vote for guardians 'who would not oppress the poor', although such concerted action did not gain the support of the Tories. The operation of the act did little to win extra support, if anything the opposite was true; as early as

⁹⁴ *Brighton Patriot*, 7 June 1836; *Brighton Herald*, 10 February 1838.

⁹⁵ *Rochester Gazette*, 16 October 1838; *Kent Herald*, 24 January 1839.

⁹⁶ *Kentish Observer*, 8 January 1835; Wells, 'Resistance to the New Poor Law', p.115.

⁹⁷ *Brighton Herald*, 9 May 1835 and 16 June 1836, *Sussex Advertiser*, 7 December 1835 and 24 April; *Kent Herald*, 13 April, 4 May, 20 July and 10 August 1837.

October 1835 the farmers were ‘so dissatisfied’ with the workings of the NPL that, under the lead of Richard Cousins, they collected damning evidence in their attempts to separate Chichester from the Union. Time did little either to ameliorate opposition, meetings to organise petitions calling for the abolition of the dreaded Act continued into the 1840s and betrayed an increasing ultra-radical stance, a meeting in April 1836 agreeing to raise a petition despite their analysis that the House of Commons represented capital and not labour.⁹⁸ Chichester was not alone in sending petitions attacking the NPL. Petitions continued to be raised in south-eastern towns well into the 1840s, variously attacking the construction costs of new workhouses falling disproportionately on occupiers rather than landlords, the excessive powers held by the Commission, the individual actions of Assistant Commissioners, the removal of paupers into central workhouses, political patronage in securing Union posts, the repeal of Gilbert’s Unions and Local Incorporations, the cessation of outdoor relief, as well calling for the total repeal of the Act.⁹⁹ Anti-NPL factions in rural parishes were also sufficiently organised to petition against various, or all, facets of the Act. The incendiarism-prone Eastry Union was the generator of a torrent of petitions in the first year of their new Union’s existence, one of which signed by farmers, traders, *and* labourers rallied against the ‘cruelty and injustices’ of the NPL. At Cowfold a petition was got up by a committee formed to record the many indiscretions of the Cuckfield Union.¹⁰⁰ Such petitions though made little parliamentary impact. The rural locale where extra-parliamentary resistance to the Act was strongest and most persistent was Alfriston, a village with a history of involvement in radical politics dating back to the beginning of the Napoleonic Wars. The election of Charles Brooker, a shopkeeper, known radical and honorary ‘leader for the poor’ as one of the two Alfriston guardians for the new Eastbourne Union had been (illegally) blocked by the PLC, and despite allegedly being promised his position by Hawley was again denied. Brooker’s dismal treatment was not forgotten, or lost, upon his plebeian supporters. Well-attended meetings at Alfriston were organised by Brooker throughout the late 1830s in order to raise petitions against the whole oppressive edifice; the third petition, raised in April 1838 audaciously claimed the Act was

⁹⁸ *Sussex Advertiser*, 27 July 1835, 2 May 1836, and 3 April 1837, 22 January 1838; *Brighton Guardian*, 29 April; *Brighton Patriot*, 20 October 1835, 19 April 1836; *Sussex Agricultural Express*, 1 April 1837; *Brighton Herald*, 20 January 1838 and 6 June 1840.

⁹⁹ *Kent Herald*, 11 June 1835, 24 March 1836, 2 February 1837, 22 February 1838, and 8 August 1839; *Sussex Advertiser*, 3 August 1835, and 19 March 1838; *Brighton Herald*, 6 February 1836, and 20 June 1840; *Greenwich, Woolwich and Deptford Patriot*, 13 January 1838; *Sussex Agricultural Express*, 5 January. Perhaps more remarkably the Faversham Union Board of Guardians petitioned for all powers to grant outdoor relief to be removed, the ultimate utilitarian’s cost-saving fantasy: *Kent Herald*, 8 August 1839.

¹⁰⁰ *Kent Herald*, 24 March and 21 April; *Times*, 4 June; *Brighton Patriot*, 29 March 1836.

'unconstitutional and unscriptural [Brooker was a Congregationalist lay preacher]... never was such a cruel law as this passed before'.¹⁰¹

The Chartist mission to the south-east, whilst principally targeting major urban centres, also initially planned visits to smaller more rurally focused towns, including Wealden Cranbrook and Tenterden. These visits never occurred, but the importance of extending the mission into the countryside was well understood by urban Chartists. Brighton and Lewes Chartists took it upon themselves to extend the mission into the surrounding countryside and as early as December 1838 held public meetings at Hove, Southwick, and Patcham. By early 1839 secret meetings were necessary due to the deployment of 'intimidatory tactics' by farmers, but did little to stop extending the mission at least as far as Hurstpierpoint. Early frustrations were eased by a Bronterre O'Brien, the official Chartist 'missionary to the Southern Counties' lecture tour in March and April. As well as lecturing at Brighton and Chichester, O'Brien spoke at Cuckfield where 'about 200 women, men, and children' comprising many railway navigators and mechanics but few labourers who had been assembled by a party who had earlier gone out to 'scour the different villages on the line of road, for recruits to aid and assist in making up a meeting', listened to his 'most inflammatory speech'.¹⁰² The tour seemed to stimulate further promotion activity by Brighton Chartists both to smaller Sussex towns including Hastings, Horsham, and Rye but not Eastbourne where a meeting was cancelled, and villages. Ringmer was the stage for at least two meetings, the second attracting 'not more than 100 persons... excluding women and children' from the surrounding villages after handbills had been distributed throughout the neighbourhood.¹⁰³ Central to the creation of a Chartist organisation at Chichester were local agricultural labourers, who as well as comprising the most stalwart and numerically significant members assembled at least twice in April and May to protect the Chartist meetings from physical attacks by their political opponents. O'Brien and Marsden, a Preston weaver who replaced O'Brien as the official Southern Chartists missionary, cleverly attempted to capitalise on rural labourers' hatred of the NPL, claiming that 'the Poor Law fed them upon what the Hogs would not eat'. The mobilisation of the NPL as an issue by the Chartists was central to fears that

¹⁰¹ *Brighton Herald*, 4 April 1835, 14 April 1838 and 30 November 1839. On Brooker's return from his supposedly successful meeting with Hawley he was drawn into Alfriston village accompanied by a band of music and was met by 'nearly the whole of Alfriston' eager to hear the result of his meeting.

¹⁰² *Kent Herald*, 24 January; R. Wells, 'Southern Chartism', in Rule and Wells, *Crime, Protest and Popular Politics*, p.132; *Sussex Agricultural Express*, 30 March 1839.

¹⁰³ *Sussex Agricultural Express*, 27 April, 4 and 11 May; *Sussex Advertiser*, 29 April; *Brighton Herald*, 4 May 1839.

the effect produced on the minds of the labouring population to whom these men are now addressing themselves by the exciting language used, may lead to the most lamentable results... what in a town like Brighton would probably excite only ridicule, in country places such as Ringmer and Cuckfield, becomes of the most serious character.¹⁰⁴

The combination of lock-outs, special constables, spies, as well as other tools of coercion, effected by grandees, magistrates and farmers stamped out the possibility of mass labouring support and the lack of any individuals and infrastructure in most villages meant that separate Chartist branches would never be viable. Chartism, however, did make a significant impact upon south-eastern labouring lives. Professor Wells' analysis of the register of the Chartist Land Plan, of which only about 25% survives, has shown that significant numbers of labourers domiciled in villages throughout the south-east subscribed to the plan. Moreover, the 'Radical Electors Association', founded by Brighton Chartists in February 1840, chose Brooker, the archetypal rural radical whose parish of Alfriston had been visited by Marsden in April 1839, as their candidate to contest the 1841 general election in an attempt to capitalise from his anti-NPL kudos in light of fears that Brighton was to be subjected to the dreaded Act. Away from his strong rural support Brooker polled a dismal nineteen votes, falling to an even more desperate sixteen in 1842 when he again stood in the by-election called in light of the bankruptcy of the (diluted) radical MP Wigney.¹⁰⁵

X: Swing's last-stand?

Whilst the implementation of the NPL from the spring of 1835 provoked the rural poor to open protests, their actions, whilst Swing-like in their combination of overt protests by organised gangs and sporadic covert protests against noxious individuals, were profoundly different in that there was one clearly defined target. In other (socially) more important senses these protests were Swing's last-stand: they represented the last attempt before the 1870's to restore 'rural communities' economic and social equilibrium'. The NPL was Swing's unwanted child and every opportunity was made to thwart its survival and success. But why did overt protests against the NPL assume such a different form? The broad-based coalition of labourers, artisans and farmers achieved during Swing was seemingly again possible. Only the most opulent farmers welcomed the NPL, opposition was founded, initially, upon the potential for distortions in local labour markets and, amongst paternally

¹⁰⁴ Wells, 'Southern Chartism', p.134; *Sussex Agricultural Express*, 30 March; *Brighton Herald*, 27 April 1839.

mindful farmers, the degrading impact upon their workers past, present and future. Once the NPL Unions were established, farmer opposition deepened as the savings made by lower poor rates were negated by rising farm rents, justified by landlords by falling poor rates, and the need to fund the various subterfuges necessary to prop up the otherwise inoperable edifice. Artisans were similarly disadvantaged by the issuing of central contracts, which removed from them vital vestry business. But not once during the NPL demonstrations did these groups openly join together. This failure to coalesce, I would contend, was a result of the failure of farmers to stick to agreements made during Swing, which acted to widen the gap between employers and employees. Reasons for the seeming quiescence of artisans are less clear-cut, although I would contend that the Reform Bill enfranchised many artisans, thereby increasing their powers of protest through political channels, as evinced by the initial opposition to the passing of the Bill in artisan dominated East Surrey, and their importance in the south-east Chartist movement.

Widening divisions between labourers and farmers were also central to the means of overt protest initially adopted. The foundation of the United Brothers in East Sussex represented a recognition that the Swing consensus had failed labouring interests through the parasitic intervention of farmers in using mob power to win tithe and rent reductions, thereby to improve labouring lives, and at the same time resist the workings of the NPL, a genuine labouring-only platform was needed to provide an undiluted message. That the medium used was a resort to rural trades unionism reflects both the well-established nature of combinations in the countryside and the high profile of agricultural unionism in the aftermath of Tolpuddle. Why then, even before the final collapse of the United Brothers, were the protests in the Kentish Swale parishes so different? The persistence of post-Swing overt protests in the area (and therefore the maintenance of a collective identity), and the unique-to-the-area method of issuing tickets combined to produce single-issue protests that were easily suppressed. The trial of these Kentish rioters was in effect the final Swing trial, and had the effect to afterwards finally drive labouring protests underground. This was the universal experience. The lessons learnt from the problems faced in the suppression of Swing were effectively applied to all anti-NPL overt protests, thereby preventing, what could have been, as Swing became, a broader based plebeian movement of a truly revolutionary nature. Future workhouse struggles were easy to suppress by virtue of their spatial confinement and did not even trouble the day-to-day operation of the Act.

Of course, during this period not all protests were targeted specifically at the workings of the new Act, but in the sense that the changes in relief policy generated massive upheaval for labouring families and impacted upon the workings of the entire rural

¹⁰⁵ Wells, 'Southern Chartism', pp.139-140 and 146-8; *Sussex Agricultural Express*, 10 December 1842.

labour market, all resentments that triggered protests were informed by the hated new law. That the level of covert protest declined from the second half of 1836 is not surprising though, as the initial psychological stress of the upheaval and attempts to restore the workings of the old Poor Law, not least in areas where overt protests had been suppressed, was manifest in a huge surge in underground acts of protest, mirroring the events immediately after Swing's suppression. Non-workhouse protests from 1837 similarly mirrored events before Swing, when protest was used by the rural poor not necessarily to restore social and economic equilibrium but rather punish the poor's oppressors for their cruelty. But unlike the 1810s and 1820s post NPL-implementation protests occurred in a rural society where farmers and labourers were even more distant and where the workings of the state, through the tentacles of the Poor Law Commission, impacted upon their daily lives in a way totally unknown to their forebears.

Chapter 10: Popular Protest in South-East England, 1790-1840

The most notable feature of Swing, report textbooks in like fashion, is that a countryside that for almost thirty years had been remarkably free from agricultural labourers' collective protests suddenly engaged in a mass national movement without no central organisation let alone established plan. This contention has received little systematic attention.¹ A more complex version of this account was issued by Roger Wells in 1979: the harsh repression of the 1795 wave of food riots meant that during the famine conditions of 1799-1801 the resort was not to 'collective bargaining by riot' but to covert protests, thereby establishing a tradition that due to the ever-weakening bargaining position of labourers would last until the establishment in the 1870's of dedicated labourers' unions. Only Swing and anti-New Poor Law demonstrations between 1800 and 1870 demonstrated discernible resort to overt tactics. However, well before the suppression of the 1795 riots, arson and threatening letters were well-established tactics in food disputes. Food riots had been a customary form and frequent form of protest in the south-east through the eighteenth-century. The 1740 famine prompted two recorded food riots; at least four occurred in the 1756-7 crisis; apparently none in the 1766 crisis; but two in 1768.² The record is doubtless defective, but it is worth noting that while in 1766 the *Kentish Post* reported no food related incidents in Kent, it did record incidents at Mitcheldever (Hampshire), and Newbury (Berkshire). At Mitcheldever after some rioters had assembled for purposes of lowering the price of grain – *taxation populaire* – threats were issued to sink the barges laden with corn and flour at Winchester before the rioters set fire to various buildings in the village. Newbury witnessed a fierce *taxation populaire* incident which left one man dead and another with a broken arm. Windows of houses were smashed in and £2,000 worth of sabotage done to various local mills.³ Whether the 1772 East Anglian disturbances breached the Thames Estuary is unclear; certainly Kentish authorities feared such outbreaks: that the riots 'in the Fens' were accompanied by arson was deemed worthy of comment by the Canterbury press.⁴ In February the *Kentish Gazette* reported that the price of wheat was so high as it continued to be 'exported weekly from Kentish ports' and that consequently 'the poor will soon find the price...become intolerable'.⁵

Despite E.P. Thompson's pioneering studies of eighteenth-century food riots, more systematic research needs to address these questions for the period before the 1790's, not least in

¹ Such a view is espoused in the key textbook on popular protests: Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances in England*, pp.262-70.

² P. Clark, 'Popular Protest and Disturbance in Kent 1558-1640', *Economic History Review*, 29, 3, (1976); R. Malcolmson, '1740', and, J. Caple, '1756-7', both in, Charlesworth (ed.), *An Atlas of Rural Protest*, pp.83-5 and 86-8; Wells, 'Social Protest', pp.156-7.

³ *Kentish Post*, 18 January and 13 August 1766.

⁴ Charlesworth (ed.), *An Atlas of Rural Protest*, pp.69 and 92-4; *Kentish Gazette*, 8 February 1772.

the south-east, which was relatively well-served by provincial newspapers and active magistrates.⁶ At least as early as 1790 wages and food prices were already juxtaposed in the minds of the labouring poor, representing both an acceptance of agrarian capitalism and an understanding of its various systems of accumulation/oppression. Nowhere is this combination of food prices and wages more apparent than in the countryside, where the calls of protestors during the grain crises of 1790-1 and 1795-6 displayed this juxtaposition. Moreover, that food riots occurred in countryside communities, and that urban riots often drew in workers from surrounding rural parishes, cast further doubts on Andrew Charlesworth's theory that 'agricultural workers rarely ever participated in such disturbances'. Of course, inhabitants of 'market towns and rural industrial communities' had grievances against 'farmers, dealers and millers over food prices and food supply' that were aggravated in periods of real or manufactured dearth, but it seems doubtful that their distancing from agrarian forms of production or their differentiated urban culture (urbanity) adequately explains their being the main, let alone sole, perpetrators of arson and threatening letters. If rural labourers were shielded during times of high prices by perquisites, for which there is little supporting systematic evidence, unsurprisingly considering that capitalist farmers already labouring under higher poor rates would take every opportunity of exploiting high grain prices through *market* transactions, then urban labourers had equivalent opportunities for 'simple pilferage'.⁷

Whilst sheep and wood stealing have both been subjected to systematic analysis,⁸ highlighting hitherto unknown complexities, grain stealing still awaits its historian. Despite this, several, admittedly tentative, conclusions can be made deriving from reports in the provincial press: firstly, many thefts of grain were of a more substantive nature than one individual could possibly carry, thereby suggesting the involvement of criminal gangs with all the usual links to urban fences; secondly, reports of persistent pilferage on individual farms suggest either an almost universal resort to theft by employees, with all the attendant risks, or, more likely, a more organised scheme whereby employees, whether an individual or several people (although not

⁵ *Kentish Gazette*, 25 February, 9, 16 and 26 May, 7 and 21 November, 2 and 30 December 1772.

⁶ E.P. Thompson, 'The 'Moral Economy' of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present*, 50 (1971); *Idem.*, 'The Moral Economy Reviewed', in *Idem.*, *Customs in Common* (London, 1991). N. Landau, *The Justices of the Peace, 1679-1760* (London, 1984). At Canterbury the *Kentish Post* was published from 1717, but survives in depth from 1726, changing its name to the *Canterbury Journal* in 1770, and then again to the *Kentish Chronicle* in 1788. Also published at Canterbury was the *Kentish Gazette* from 1768. At Lewes the *Sussex Weekly Advertiser* was published from 1747. Maidstone did not have a newspaper until 1786 with the first publication of the *Maidstone Journal*. Counties surrounding London, including Surrey, received limited coverage from 1788 in the *County Chronicle* which was published in London.

⁷ Charlesworth, 'The Development of the English Rural Proletariat', pp.59-60 (page reference taken from the version reprinted in Reed and Wells, *Class, Conflict and Protest*).

necessarily the same persistent offenders that made up criminal gangs), stole to feed both their families but also to generate cash by selling the 'surplus'. Another topic that awaits systematic analysis is the involvement of urban workers, not least labourers and artisans, in the harvest with all the potential attendant perquisites. It is also important to remember that the civic tradition of public subscriptions to assist the poor was stronger in urban centres than in villages, especially those rural communities that had no resident gentry to organise such schemes, whilst rural vestries' attempts to minimise relief expenditures generated considerable resentments against farmers, not least those acting as overseers.

Professor Wells' thesis on the changing nature of protest in the English countryside has already provoked much comment and critique, some incorporated into his recently refining concept to acknowledge 'the diversity of the regional response to the famines and other problems' in the 1790s. Wells has also acknowledged that arson had been used before the 1790s to enforce both 'moral economy' and customary rights.⁹ Evidence for the south-east suggests further revision to his original thesis is required. In Kent the level of incendiarism was actually higher in the first grain crisis than during the second, whilst the number of recorded food riots in Kent during the second crisis has been significantly underestimated. Whilst Sussex was more prone to incendiarism during the second crisis than the first, most of the recorded fires occurred in a relatively small area clustered around the coastal strip from Hastings to Lancing.¹⁰ Moreover, food riots *did occur* in Sussex during the second crisis, despite the brutal suppression of the Seaford-Newhaven siege in 1795, and were largely rural in origin. Evidence for Surrey is exceptionally patchy, due to the lack of a county press, but this revision establishes the persistence of a riotous tradition in Surrey towns during the second crisis. As already noted, attempts to quantify any form of popular protests are problematic but given that the depth and quality of sources available for the period between 1790 and 1828 increased very little, not least in the most-incendiary prone county of Kent, a comparison over time stands.¹¹ *Incendiarism* undoubtedly increased in both the first and second grain crises but, with the exception of East Sussex where both the level of incendiarism allied to an increased resort to threatening letters was discernible over and above the first crisis, this represented a continuation of an already well-established tradition. Nationally, Wells' thesis still holds but for southern England only Somerset

⁸ J. Rule, 'The Manifold Causes of Rural Crime: Sheep-Stealing in England c.1740-1840', in *Idem.* (ed.), *Outside the Law*; R. Wells, 'Sheep Stealing in Yorkshire in the Age of the Industrial and Agricultural Revolutions', *Northern History*, 20 (1984); R. Bushaway, 'From Custom to Crime'.

⁹ Wells, 'The Development of the English Rural Proletariat'; *Idem.*, 'Social Protest', pp.157-8.

¹⁰ See Map 2.2.

¹¹ See Appendix 2.3, part i.ii.

and Sussex saw a discernibly higher resort to arson during the second crisis than the first, whilst for the grain counties of Kent and Berkshire the scenario is reversed.¹²

The level of south-eastern incendiaryism did not notably increase until after 1815 when the onset of the agrarian depression accelerated the rate of decline of real wages that undoubtedly had occurred during the previous 22 years, and tended to significantly reduce the generosity of relief. Even before 1815, though, other forms of covert protest were frequently resorted to but, for the Napoleonic War period, have hitherto been all but ignored by historians. The current thesis shows clearly that understandings of rural popular protest must consider non-arson forms of protest: they, like arson, offered the rural poor an important psychological release and an anonymous means to register objections and punish their oppressors. The malicious damaging of plants, or plant maiming, as I have christened this evidently important protest tool, has almost been completely ignored by historians; the sole coverage being John Archer's acknowledgement that such attacks on this valuable living capital represent an 'intriguing puzzle' and Professor Wells' identification that not 'even a nurseryman's award-winning dahlias were not sacrosanct' from anti-New Poor Law protesters.¹³ In certain localities, not least hop districts, plant maiming assumed serious levels, moreover it was often as financially punishing as arson, but unlike incendiary fires the doing of the deed did not instantly draw attention to itself (unlike animal maiming, for plants do not squeal in agony), thereby offering a means of protest with a diminished chance of gaol. The almost negligible number of plant maiming cases brought to trial attests plant maiming's success as a form of covert protest, and at least partly explains why historians have yet to appreciate plant maiming as among the most important forms of rural protest. Levels of animal maiming and malicious damage show no discernible increase until after 1816, an increase that for plant maiming started in 1812.¹⁴ During the first grain crisis, only malicious damage, of these three non-arson covert protest forms, was noticeably resorted to, but during 1800, at the height of the second crisis, all three forms were deployed in the south-east. Although the numbers are low, this trend supports Wells' thesis on the increased importance of covert protest after the repression of the first grain crisis. Despite this, it is now clear that any consideration of the changing nature of protest must not stick rigidly to the conception that arson (allied to threatening letters) was the only important form of covert protest.

So, what of the role of overt protest in the English countryside after the widespread riots of 1801? Until now, no study of overt protest in the south-east has been undertaken for the period between 1802 and the start of Swing, surprisingly considering the skill shown by Swing gangs, and gatherings, to organise both themselves and their objectives. Indeed, Professor Wells'

¹² Based on information in chapter 6 and Wells, 'The English Rural Proletariat', pp.42-3.

¹³ Archer, *By a Flash and a Scare*, p.18; Wells, 'Resistance to the New Poor Law', p.106.

¹⁴ See Appendix 2.3, part ii.iv

considerations of overt protest in this period have, somewhat ironically given his earlier calls, fallen entirely on the 'landmark' protests of 1816 and 1822.¹⁵ However, between 1802 and 1830 the rural poor in the south-east repeatedly demonstrated their capacity to think, and act, collectively.

Between 1802 and 1809 the only evidence of significant resort to overt protests were combinations amongst urban journeymen. 1810 provides a slightly different picture: renewed radical agitation in the towns was accompanied by overt enclosure disputes and evidence of collective bargaining in the harvest. Evidence from 1815 onwards is more conclusive that rural workers still had a capacity to openly protest. Most Kentish Paper-mills were located in the villages in the vicinity of Maidstone where the hop industry was also a major employer, and as such the paper-makers campaign against machinery was focused on rural communities. The anti-aristocracy, pro-Corn Law riots at Canterbury in 1815 drew in 'labourers of the neighbourhood'. The intensity of protest in East Anglia during 1816 was not replicated in the south-east, but protests did occur, including food riots occurred in rural East Sussex (at Battle and Herstmonceaux) and at Chatham and Guildford. Irish labourers were also attacked; and covert protests were deployed in food related disputes, including an attack on a Milton-next-Gravesend grocer, and against the users' of threshing machines. Beyond 1816, evidence is sporadic until 1821-2 when Irish labourers were again victimised, combinations existed amongst agricultural labourers and vestry meetings were besieged by riotous labourers; a combination of protests that characterised the again sporadic use of overt protest between 1823 and 1828.

What this conclusively shows, though, is that rural workers did, albeit infrequently, resort to open protests between the landmark overt protests of the grain crises and Swing. Further evidence of the capacity of the rural poor to act collectively in defence of their interests comes in the form of the activities of poaching, smuggling and more broadly criminal gangs who persisted in the face of the entrenched forces of law and order, not least smuggling gangs who remained active after the creation in 1817 of the (central) government-funded Coastal Blockade. Gang activities suggests both the existence of an alternative plebeian culture which supported, often not needing to hide, the resort to activities outlawed under statute, evidence of a vibrant countryside 'moral economy'.¹⁶

Does any of this explain, or even make predictable, Swing? Whilst the grandmaster of rural radicalism William Cobbett had predicted as early as 1828 the likelihood of an insurrectionary movement in the Autumn of 1830, Swing, in the form that it took, was not

¹⁵ Wells, 'Social Protest', pp.158-9.

¹⁶ For an important and detailed discussion of the Coastal Blockade's 'war' against smuggling in the 1820s see: R. Philp, *The Coastal Blockade: The Royal Navy's War on Smuggling in Kent and Sussex 1817-1831* (Horsham, 1999).

predictable. Protests escalated in 1828 and again in 1829, but for neither year was protest as intense as in 1822; but the extent of events in 1828 and 1829 were in themselves evidence enough, to some observers, of a rural revolt already happening. However, such analyses failed to consider that these protests betrayed little sense of collective action among labourers in different parishes: rather protests were self-contained. More compelling is the evidence that the dreadful harvests of 1828 and 1829, and the exceptionally cold winter of 1829-30, reduced the condition of an already degraded rural poor, and made more dramatic and widespread protests more likely. But even this does not mean that a major movement covering the whole of Southern England, East Anglia, and much of central England was predictable.

Whilst chapter 5 has already offered several significant conclusions on the nature of Swing, based on chapters 2, 3 and 4, several further observations need to be made in order to locate Swing into the broader histories of protest in the English countryside. As already observed, Swing developed into a movement because of a *set* of complex factors and contingencies. The Elham gang, who effectively commenced their operations in 1829, whilst highly geographically mobile, were constrained by the physical limits of how far their (already labouring and undernourished) bodies could walk in an evening. These problems were partly overcome by their capability to divide into two groups so as to undertake machine breaking in two different areas during the same evening, and by their links to other groups of disenchanted labourers in further parishes. Such were the means that Swing spread throughout the whole of Kent and East Sussex, and after it had established itself in West Sussex, by means of examples elsewhere, the same modes of contagion were equally important in diffusing Swing.

That the major impetus to this diffusion came from the inability of the authorities to effectively suppress the initial events in Elham and around Sevenoaks is not surprising. These failures showcased, again, that overt protests and intensive campaigns of terror were possible, and, more specifically, that the destruction of threshing machines would not be more than notionally punished: messages that were clearly received and immediately implemented by the communities in the vicinities of Sevenoaks and Elham. Similarly the response of Peel and the county magistracy, and their important and negotiated interplay, after the Canterbury Trial did not change the form that Swing subsequently took, for in the huge majority of the parochial risings that so typified Swing in West Kent, East and West Sussex and southern Surrey, the forces of repression were forever responding to events rather than preventing them. Not even the presence of troops in nearby market towns stopped assemblages from gathering.

To what extent therefore did Swing utilise an already existing cultural vocabulary of protest? I would contend that the way in which Swing *rapidly* snowballed into a national movement detached it from the past experiences of the rural poor. The destruction of threshing machines before 1830 was entirely achieved through a resort to arson; parochial mobbings had

not (outside of the context of the riots during the grain crises of 1794-6 and 1799-1801) previously spilled over into adjoining parishes, let alone into non-neighbouring communities; arson had been used previously to reinforce earlier threats or overt protests but had only been used sporadically, and very rarely in an intensive way which targeted more than one farmer, moreover arson during the pre-Swing years was only one of many covert protest forms resorted to by the rural poor, but, as we have noted, during Swing the only other covert protests were limited to a very small number of animal maiming cases.

Swing did, though, draw on these already practised protest forms and utilise them in hitherto unknown ways, often, as Graham Seal has noted, informed by aspects of customary culture. Swing gangs frequently resorted to ritual elements such as disguise (black faces, cross-dressing), levying money of victuals (known as 'quête customs', associated with 'luck visiting'), perambulating (house visiting, procession), adornment (the dressing in special clothes), officials (almost every custom or ceremony has some sort of named leader), effigies (both human and of significant objects – most notably used at Ninfield when the procession removing the assistant overseer also carried a giant pair of scissors, a reference to the degrading practice of shaving the hair of pauper women), and music (horns, bells, chanting, bellowing).¹⁷ Seal's identification of the resort to 'mock violence' needs some qualification though. Elsewhere I have challenged Hobsbawm and Rudé's widely-cited analysis that 'there can rarely have been a movement of the despairing poor so large and so widespread which used, or even threatened, so little violence', asserting that Swing crowds, and the individuals therein, frequently resorted to violence to force their objectives.¹⁸ The verbal threats, buffeting, jostling and manhandling Seal, correctly, identifies were in no sense 'mock' but were an integral and explicit part of the protest; indeed, considering the important role that violence often played in many customary ceremonies and the mask of customary ceremonies used to legitimise violence, for instance in Neeson's anti-enclosure football matches, or the 'squirrel hunting' and 'St Andr'ng' 'amusements' noted by Bushaway in southern England, it does not seem useful to label all customary ceremonies that displayed any resort to violence as 'mock'.¹⁹

The reliance on customary forms by Swing crowds was more than a simple falling-back on a communally shared frame of reference, a resort to the 'village guide to cultural etiquette', but an attempt to assert the rights of the poor through the deliberate rhetoric of the justified and

¹⁷ G. Seal, 'Tradition and Agrarian Protest in Nineteenth-Century England and Wales', *Folklore*, 99 (1988), pp.146-169.

¹⁸ Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p.17; C. Griffin, "'The Peasantry will learn the secret of their own physical strength': On the Possibilities of Actual, Symbolic, Simulated and Threatened Violence in the 'Swing Riots'", paper presented to the International Conference on the History of Violence, University of Liverpool, July 2001.

¹⁹ Neeson, *Commoners*, pp.266-7; B. Bushaway, *By Rite: Custom, Ceremony and Community in England 1700-1880* (London, 1982), pp.180-1.

ancient customary order that, in the eyes of most Swing participants, including Cobbett, needed restoring in a rural society dangerously fragmented by market capitalism. Swing should be considered as a mass re-staging of the customary (rural) society; it was often as much about the 'performance' that 'transcended...everyday mundanities' as it was about the achieving of any tangible change. When Richard Hodd, a member of a mobile Sussex Wealden Swing gang, exclaimed 'he was never so happy in his life as he was on that day', he articulated the most important aspect of Swing, the sense of relief and joy that the participants were being heard, that plebeian communities were being heard.²⁰

Such an analysis makes the aftermath of Swing seem less surprising. Between 1831 and 1833 the persistence of overt protests and the continued resort to (excluding Swing itself) record levels of incendiarism were essentially either attempts to finish Swing's work, for instance the destruction of threshing machines that had somehow survived the autumn and winter of 1830, or attempts to force farmers to honour their agreements made during Swing, punishing those that so quickly reneged. Despite what were, in comparison to the pre-Swing period, such intense resorts to protest, the events of 1831-3 in no sense represent Swing *redividus*. Moreover, despite Swing's extraordinarily rapid diffusion, the south-eastern evidence suggests that even without the later orchestrated suppression, Swing would have fizzled out anyway, except perhaps in a few places due to the efforts of the politically active members of working-class communities. Why then did the introduction of the New Poor Law provoke a renewed resort to overt protest?

Rapid wage reductions after Swing revealed many farmers and vestries to be even more duplicitous than previously thought, their high-jacking of the labourers' movement to force their own agendas on what later seemed like a pretence that it would benefit the labourers through making affordable higher wages. This betrayal combined with the massive disappointment that the Reform Bill offered labourers nothing other than further evidence that parliament was not concerned with improving their quality of life. That the first major legislative product of the newly reformed House of Commons was a Bill that would separate poor families, and incarcerate those looking for employment, represented the effective absolution of paternalist responsibility and the final death knell for the customary society that Swing sought to revive. Overt protests, although varying in their methods from place to place, were the attempt by a rural poor whose pain was almost numbed through disappointment to re-enact themselves, to defend, as and where possible, their vestigial rights. The major innovation of the New Poor Law disturbances was the resort to a formally organised agricultural trade unionism. Whilst the previous 44 years, and possibly even before (something that needs investigation) had shown that labourers were capable of forming combinations to attempt to win higher wages, their efforts had not stretched to

²⁰ Prosecution brief prepared by the Treasury Solicitor in the case of the King, for William Endersby Esq,

establishing Trades Unions with set rules and funds. The failure of the United Brothers was as much a testament to its failure to win stronger support amongst the labouring community, a function of this form of protest's novelty, as it was to the effective lock-out masterminded by Curteis.

Beyond 1840 until the creation of the much longer-lived Kent and Sussex Labourers' Union in 1872, the history of the struggle of the south-eastern rural poor still remains largely unwritten, as evinced by the gap for southern England in Andrew Charlesworth's *Atlas of Rural Protest in Britain, 1548-1900* between John Lowerson's study of Anti-Poor Law Movements in 1835 and Felicity Carlton's study of the Kent and Sussex Labourers' Union. Beyond Roger Wells' hitherto somewhat impressionistic work on the 1840s, 1850s and 1860s there remains *no* systematic account of popular protests.²¹ This represents a major gap in our understanding of both long-run social change and the long-term impact of the New Poor Law on the rural south. John Archer's pioneering studies of arson and animal maiming in East Anglia during this period highlight that despite the unprecedented resort to covert protests in the 1840s and early 1850s (levels that subsequently declined but still remained far in excess of the levels seen in the 1820's and late 1830's) the rural poor did still occasionally resort to overt protests to win higher wages.²² Until a similar study is undertaken for the south-east, East Anglia will remain our sole reference point for these trends. Considering that that conclusions drawn from elsewhere are not necessarily valid when taken out of the local context, a belief central to this thesis, this is a project that I urge the keen reader to explore further.

against Richard Hodd, John Wickens for Riot, Lewes Winter Assizes 1830, PRO TS 11/1007.

²¹ Lowerson, 'Anti Poor-Law Movements', and, F. Carlton, 'The Kent and Sussex Labourers' Union 1872-95', in Charlesworth (ed.), *An Atlas of Rural Protest*, pp.155-8 and 173-7; Wells, 'Social Protest', pp.170-3 and 200-1.

²² Archer, *By a Flash and a Scare*, chapters 4 and 5.

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Appendix 1.1: All events, 1829 – the start of Machine Breaking

1829

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Parish</i> | <i>County</i> | <i>Incident</i> | <i>Details</i> |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| 2 January | Patcham | Sussex | Attack/ Assault | On Rev. Hudson |
| 9 January | St. Stephens, Canterbury | Kent | Malicious damage | Fence destroyed. Many similar acts recently |
| <i>Poss. January</i> | <i>Precise location unclear</i> | <i>Sussex</i> | <i>Incendiary letter</i> | <i>Acquitted at County Sessions</i> |
| 3 February | Elmstead | Kent | Attack/ Assault | Small tithe collector |
| 4 February | Westerham | Kent | Attack + malicious damage | Much damage inc attack on bedroom |
| Late March | Chichester vicinity | Sussex | Many depredations | Including thefts |
| 28 March | Chichester | Sussex | Arson | 2 hay-stacks. 3 rd time in 10 years |
| 7/8 April | Heyshot | Sussex | Arson | Barn |
| 7/8 April | Cocking | Sussex | Arson | Wheat rick |
| 11 April | Pevensey | Sussex | Attack/ Assault | 'Respectable' yeoman |
| 27 April | Chatham | Kent | Malicious damage | Surgeon's plaque + gate |
| March/ April | Hellingly | Sussex | Attack/ Assault | Overseer |
| 27 April | Speldhurst | Kent | Animal maiming (hair cut from horses) | |
| Early May | Uckfield | Sussex | Animal maiming (hair cut from horses) | Members of a Prosecution Society |
| 17 May | Chichester | Sussex | Plant maiming | Cucumber + asparagus beds damaged |
| 18 May | Chichester | Sussex | Malicious damage | Fence destroyed |
| 23 May | Dover | Kent | Malicious damage | Numerous victims |
| 17 May | Tunbridge Wells | Kent | Riot | 300+ workmen digging the canal |
| 27 May | Lyminge | Kent | Arson | Barn inc a threshing machine |
| Early June | Canterbury | Kent | Plant maiming | Several cases |
| Mid June | Lenham | Kent | Animal maiming | One sheep |
| 14 June | Brighton | Sussex | Malicious damage | Iron railings |
| 15 June | Chichester | Sussex | Animal maiming | One pig |
| 10 July | Sheerness | Kent | Arson | Destroyed 7 houses |
| 27 July | Chatham | Kent | Animal maiming | Several pigs poisoned |
| Summer | Worthing | Sussex | Animal maiming | 2 pigs |
| 10 August | Tunbridge Wells | Kent | Animal maiming | 1 sheep |
| Late August | Oakwood (Funtington) | Sussex | Arson | 2 barns and machinery. Rev. Porcher |
| Late September | West Wittering | Sussex | Malicious damage | Sluice destroyed |
| Late September | Ardingly | Sussex | Malicious damage | Windows of a new cottage |
| 1/2 October | Tunbridge Wells | Kent | Animal maiming | Mare and several pigs |

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|---------------|--------------------|--------|---------------------------|--|
| 3 October | Ardingly-Cuckfield | Sussex | Demonstration | 150 people marched to Bench armed with bludgeons |
| 5 October | Ramsgate | Kent | Arson | Theatre |
| Early October | Ardingly | Sussex | Threatening letters | |
| 10 October | Ardingly | Sussex | Arson | Tithe produce + threshing machine |
| Mid October | Chart Sutton | Kent | Riot | Hop pickers |
| 23 October | Eastchurch | Kent | Arson | Barns including a threshing machine |
| Late October | Fletchling | Sussex | Arson (2) | Mansion house of Earl of Sheffield |
| 30 October | Minster (Sheppy) | Kent | Arson | Farm yard |
| 30 October | Minster (Sheppy) | Kent | Arson | Farm yard |
| 8 November | Minster (Sheppy) | Kent | Arson | Farm yard |
| 8 November | Minster (Sheppy) | Kent | Arson | Farm yard |
| Mid November | Lewes | Sussex | Malicious damage | Fence and wall broken twice over two nights |
| 1 December | Ramsgate | Kent | Arson | Theatre |
| Mid December | Chichester | Sussex | Malicious damage | Iron railings |
| Late December | Hawkhurst/Weald | Kent | Animal maiming (17 cases) | Hair cut from horses |

1830

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Parish</i> | <i>County</i> | <i>Incident</i> | <i>Details</i> |
|----------------|------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|---|
| 5 January | Goudhurst + Horsmonden | Kent | Animal maiming | Manes and tails cut from horses of at least 4 farmers |
| 8 January | Sheerness | Kent | Arson | Pipes of engines cut |
| Mid January | Bethersden | Kent | Animal maiming | Manes and tails cut from horses of 2 farmers |
| 11 January | Tunbridge Wells | Kent | Animal maiming | Horse stabbed |
| Mid February | Ditchling | Sussex | Animal maiming | Manes and tails cut from horses of several farmers |
| 10 February | Tortington | Sussex | Malicious damage + plant maiming | Glass frame + flowering plants |
| Early February | Bethersden | Kent | Threatening letters (several) | Mr. Lansdell the acting overseer |
| 15 February | Bethersden | Kent | Attempted assassination | Mr. Lansdell. 60 shots |
| 18 February | Hadlow | Kent | Arson | Barn |
| 26 February | Rye | Sussex | Sluice partially destroyed | By a body of men |
| 28 February | Rye | Sussex | Sluice totally destroyed | By a body of men |
| Late February | Orpington | Kent | Machine breaking | Corn mill used to employ the poor damaged |
| Mid March | Westwell | Kent | Threatening letter | Accompanied by sheep stealing |
| 13 March | Rotherhithe | Surrey | Arson (several) | Several premises fired. (Say 2) |
| Early April | Orpington | Kent | Machine breaking | Corn mill used to employ the poor damaged |

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|-------------|--------------------------|--------|---|--|
| 6 April | Hastings | Sussex | Malicious damage | Iron railings |
| 10 April | Orpington | Kent | Machine breaking | Corn mill used to employ the poor damaged |
| 13+14 April | Sheerness | Kent | Riot + assault | Effigies of clergy and others. Warden attacked |
| 25 April | Brighton | Sussex | Arson | Lumber room in a house |
| 27 April | Chichester | Sussex | Arson | Common set fire to for the third time in last few years |
| 28 April | Rye | Sussex | Attempt to destroy sluice | Party prevented |
| 29 April | Rye | Sussex | Sluice destroyed | 1,000 people |
| 27 May | Deptford | Kent | Arson | House |
| 29 May | Deptford | Kent | Arson | House again set on fire |
| 29 May | Bromley | Kent | Arson | Brewery |
| 31 May | Lewes | Sussex | Riot + malicious damage + plant maiming | Gang of lads. Gratings, gas pipes, young trees destroyed |
| Late May | Canterbury | Kent | Plant maiming | Two trees 'barked' |
| Early June | Rye | Sussex | Attempt to blow up bridge | Foiled by Coastal Blockade |
| 1 June | Orpington | Kent | Arson | Mr. Mosyer |
| 3 June | Orpington | Kent | Arson | |
| 4/5 June | Canterbury | Kent | Plant maiming | 4 trees 'barked' |
| 6 June | Orpington | Kent | Arson | Mr. Voules |
| 6 June | Lewes | Sussex | Malicious damage + plant maiming | Seats and young trees torn up |
| 8 June | Orpington | Kent | Arson | Unspecified premises |
| 8 June | Woodmancote (West) | Sussex | Animal maiming | Tails + manes cut from 4 horses |
| 8 June | Aldingbourne | Sussex | Animal maiming | Manes + tails cut from 5 horses |
| 21 June | Rotherhithe | Surrey | Attack | Irish labs attacked by English |
| 22 June | Uckfield | Sussex | Plant maiming | 100+ hop vines cut |
| 26 June | Sturry | Kent | Plant maiming | Young gooseberry bushes |
| 29 June | Shoreham | Kent | Arson | Mr. Lore |
| Early July | Thanet | Kent | Attack | On Irish labourers |
| 3 July | East Grinstead | Sussex | Arson | Mrs. Fuller |
| 5-8 July | Brighton | Sussex | Strike | Journeymen tailors |
| 12 July | Rye | Sussex | Riot | Election |
| July | Sevenoaks (Riverhead) | Kent | Arson | Mr. Swasland |
| 27 July | Great Chart | Kent | Arson | Farm yard |
| 1 August | Chiddingstone | Kent | Arson | Faggot stack |
| 2 August | Caterham | Surrey | Arson | Farm yard |
| 3 August | Sundridge | Kent | Arson | Mr. Thomspen. Possibly one case previously |
| 6 August | Sundridge | Kent | Arson | Mr. Thomspen |
| 9 August | Sundridge | Kent | Arson | Mr. Thomspen |
| Mid August | Jevington (Winterbourne) | Sussex | Attack | On Irish labourers |
| 14 August | Dover | Kent | Arson | Bomb placed by door |
| 20 August | Sundridge | Kent | Arson | Mr. Masters. Possibly attacked previously |

Appendix 1.2: Incidents from the start of Machine Breaking to the end of 1830

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Parish</i> | <i>County</i> | <i>Incident</i> | <i>Details</i> |
|----------------|---------------------------|---------------|----------------------------|--|
| 24.08.1830 | Elham (Wingmore) | Kent | Threshing machine | |
| 24.08.1830 | Brasted | Kent | Arson | Mrs. Minet |
| 28.08.1830 | Upper Hardres (Palmstead) | Kent | Threshing machine | Mr. Collick |
| 28.08.1830 | Lyminge (Stone Street) | Kent | Threshing machines (2) | Stephen Kelsey |
| 28.08.1830 | Sundridge | Kent | Arson | Mr. Thompson |
| 29.08.1830 | Newington-next-Hythe | Kent | Threshing machine | Norwood Woolett |
| 1-2.09.1830 | Sundridge | Kent | Arson | Mr. Masters |
| 1-2.09.1830 | Sundridge | Kent | Arson | Mr. Thomson (5 th fire) |
| 1-2.09.1830 | Brasted | Kent | Arson | Mrs. Minet |
| 3.09-6.10.1830 | Sundridge | Kent | Arson (3) | Mr. Thompson (6 th , 7 th & 8 th fires) |
| 08.09.1830 | Albury (Brook) | Surrey | Arson | Farm yard |
| 8-15.09.1830 | Shere | Surrey | Animal maiming | 2 cows and several pigs poisoned |
| 09.09.1830 | Cowden | Kent | Arson | Farm yard |
| Mid September | Sundridge | Kent | Threatening letter | Mr. Masters |
| Mid September | Sundridge (Ide Hill) | Kent | Threatening letter | Widow Huble |
| Mid September | Westerham | Kent | Threatening letter | Mr. Warde |
| Mid September | Sevenoaks | Kent | Threatening letter | Mr. Morphew |
| 16 September | Brabourne | Kent | Threshing Machine | |
| 18.09.1830 | Lyminge (Stone Street) | Kent | poss Threshing Machine (2) | Stephen Kelsey. Info a little dubious |
| 18.09.1830 | Upper Hardres | Kent | Threshing Machine (2) | William Dodd |
| 20.09.1830 | Sellindge (Lees) | Kent | Threshing Machine | Mr. Pearson |
| 20.09.1830 | Barham | Kent | Threshing Machine (poss) | Mr. Kelcey |
| 20.09.1830 | Barham | Kent | Threshing Machine | Sir Henry Oxenden |
| 20.09.1830 | Womenswold (Denne Hill) | Kent | Threshing Machine | Sir Henry Montresor |
| 20.09.1830 | Womenswold | Kent | Threshing Machine | Mr. Holtum |
| 20.09.1830 | Barham | Kent | Threshing Machine | John Sankey. 2 ladders also sawn to pieces |
| 22.09.1830 | Stanford | Kent | Threshing Machine | Mr. Hughes |
| 22.09.1830 | Brabourne | Kent | Threshing Machine | Mr. Mills |
| 25.09.1830 | Dover | Kent | Malicious damage | Gas lamps damaged, fittings cut, glass broken, gas turned off. |
| 27.09.1830 | Hougham (Farthingloe) | Kent | Threshing Machine | Mr. Barter. Being conveyed - stripped of iron work and set on fire. |
| 01.10.1830 | Hougham | Kent | Threshing Machine | Mr. Rose. Owned by Barter. 100-200 labourers. |
| 1-5.10.1830 | Sturry (area) | Kent | Threatening letters (2) | |

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|------------------------|----------------------------|--------|---|--|
| 02.10.1830 | Sturry | Kent | Threshing Machine | Mr. Reader |
| 02.10.1830 | Sturry | Kent | Threshing Machine | Mr. Laslett |
| 2-6 October | Farningham (area?) | Kent | Arson?? (maybe Oxted fire, but 16 miles away!)) | Maybe Oxted fire but 16 miles away! |
| 05.10.1830 | Oxted | Surrey | Arson | Including a threshing machine |
| 05.10.1830 | Ash-Lyminge (between) | Kent | Rockets fired (in a line) | |
| 05.10.1830 | Lyminge | Kent | Arson | Rev. Price |
| 05.10.1830 | Ash | Kent | Arson | Mr. Becker. Including a threshing machine |
| 06.10.1830 | Dover - Canterbury | Kent | 'Swing' graffiti | Swing |
| 06.10.1830 | Dover | Kent | Threatening letter | Signed 'Swing' |
| 06.10.1830 | Dover | Kent | Threatening letter | Signed 'Swing' |
| 06.10.1830 | Margate | Kent | Threat to destroy threshing machine | Major Garrett. May have actually broken the machine. |
| 07.10.1830 | Otford | Kent | Arson | Mr. Jordan. Pipes of fire engine cut. |
| 07.10.1830 | Sundridge | Kent | Arson | Mr. Thomspson (his ninth fire) |
| 07.10.1830 | Otford | Kent | Threatening Letter | Mr. Jordan |
| 08.10.1830 | Wrotham – Farningham | Kent | Arson | Farm yard |
| 08.10.1830 (or before) | Kearsney. Ewell | Kent | Threshing machines placed in fields | John Coleman + George Dell. Both placed their machine in fields preparatory to their destruction |
| 08.10.1830 | Hougham | Kent | Threshing Machine | Widow Pepper. Broken and then set on fire |
| 08.10.1830 | Hougham | Kent | Threatening letter | Widow Pepper. Saying machine would be broken + that it should be placed in 'open fields' |
| 10.10.1830 | Ramsgate (Dumpton) | Kent | Arson | |
| 11.10.1830 | Hadlow | Kent | Arson | |
| 12.10.1830 | Lenham | Kent | Implements destroyed | Sawed to pieces |
| 12-13 October | Maidstone | Kent | Radical Political Demo | Mayor gave permission for meeting to 'harangue the Working Classes' |
| 12-16 October | Maidstone (vicinity) | Kent | Threatening letters (2) | Outbuildings to be set on fire if parish poor not employed |
| 12-16 October | Wrotham | Kent | Threatening letter | |
| 13.10.1830 | Sevenoaks | Kent | Threatening letters (several) | Reported several letters received threatening town would be set fire in 3 different places |
| 14.10.1830 | Maidstone | Kent | Radical Political Demo | Cobbett lecture. 3d entry fee |
| 15.10.1830 | Maidstone | Kent | Threatening Letter | To set fire to the town on Saturday. Signed 'Swing' |
| 16.10.1830 | Battle | Sussex | Radical Political Demo | Cobbett lecture. Entry to be 3d. 'that the WORKING PEOPLE may not be shut out' |
| 17.10.1830 | Hartfield | Sussex | Arson | Barn |
| 18-23.10.1830 | Northfleet (Isfield Place) | Kent | Threatening letter | Saying during the week their stacks will be burnt. |

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|---------------|------------------------------|--------|-------------------------------|---|
| 18-23.10.1830 | Maidstone (area) | Kent | Threatening letters (several) | One sealed in blood |
| 18-25.10.1830 | Northfleet | Kent | Threatening Letter | Stacks to be burnt during the week |
| 21.10.1830 | Newington-next-Sittingbourne | Kent | Arson | |
| 21.10.1830 | Borden | Kent | Arson | |
| 22.10.1830 | Ulcomb | Kent | Assemblage | Entered the Vestry, turned off the lights + broke the tables |
| 22.10.1830 | Ash | Kent | Arson | Gratten stack |
| 22.10.1830 | Hartlip | Kent | Threshing Machine | Party had blackened faces |
| 22.10.1830 | Boxley | Kent | Arson | |
| 23.10.1830 | Shipbourne (Green) | Kent | Arson | |
| 23.10.1830 | Barham (nr. Patixbourne) | Kent | Threshing Machine | Mr. Harvey |
| 23.10.1830 | Sandwich | Kent | Arson | Robert Castle. Refused to 'lay the machine down': destroyed |
| 23.10.1830 | Ash | Kent | Arson (foiled) | Mr. Quested. Stable broken open + horses let out – fled after being disturbed by men on watch |
| 23.10.1830 | Bekesbourne | Kent | Threshing Machine | John Friday |
| 23.10.1830 | Patixbourne | Kent | Threshing Machine | Austen Gardner |
| 23.10.1830 | Sandwich | Kent | Threshing Machine | |
| 24.10.1830 | Cobham | Kent | Arson | Lord Darnley. Rockets had also been recently fired in the vicinity |
| 24.10.1830 | Tunbridge | Kent | Political Placard | 'Nice Pickings' |
| 24.10.1830 | Dover | Kent | Arson | Bottle full of gunpowder set fire to + exploded: broke windows |
| 24.10.1830 | Stockbury | Kent | Arson | Labs refused to help |
| 24.10.1830 | Stockbury | Kent | Demonstration | After the fire labourers paraded the village with a black flag |
| 24-26.10.1830 | Rainham | Kent | Assemblages | Large bodies of men armed with bludgeons |
| 25.10.1830 | Wormshill | Kent | Assemblage | 80-100 men. Used compulsion |
| 25.10.1830 | Frinstead | Kent | Assemblage | With Wormshill men. Were to proceed to Charing Heath. |
| 25.10.1830 | Ash (Goldstone) | Kent | Threshing Machine | Mr. Southee |
| 25.10.1830 | Ash (Oversland) | Kent | Threshing Machine | Mr. Petley |
| 25.10.1830 | Stourmouth | Kent | Threshing Machine | Mr. Fox |
| 25.10.1830 | Stourmouth | Kent | Threshing Machine | Mr. Dowker |
| 25.10.1830 | Stourmouth | Kent | Threshing Machine | Mr. Addley |
| 25.10.1830 | Stourmouth | Kent | Threshing Machine | Mr. Culmer |
| 25.10.1830 | Wingham | Kent | Threshing Machine | Mr. Dadd |
| 25.10.1830 | Wingham | Kent | Threshing Machine | Mrs. Matson |
| 25.10.1830 | Wingham | Kent | Threshing Machine | Mr. Sweetlove |
| 25.10.1830 | Queenborough | Kent | Riot | |
| 25.10.1830 | Sittingbourne | Kent | Strike | |
| 25.10.1830 | Newington | Kent | Assemblage | To enforce demands on their employers. |
| 25.10.1830 | Fletching (Sheffield Park) | Sussex | Threatening Letter | Ask to remove baliffs or stewards or have their mansions destroyed. |
| 25-27.10.1830 | Isle of Sheppy | Kent | Arson (2) | No specific parishes or locations |

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|---------------|------------------------------|------|---------------------------|--|
| 26.10.1830 | Frinstead | Kent | Assemblage | Were to meet with Watringbury men |
| 26.10.1830 | Wormshill | Kent | Assemblage | |
| 26.10.1830 | Lenham | Kent | Assemblage | |
| 26.10.1830 | Selling | Kent | Arson | Labourers just looked on. |
| 26.10.1830 | Ospringe | Kent | Assemblage | |
| 26.10.1830 | Ash | Kent | Strike | Refusing to go to work for less than 1.2 a crown per married man. |
| 26.10.1830 | Boughton-under-Blean | Kent | Arson | Boughton Hill |
| 27.10.1830 | Stockbury | Kent | Assemblage | |
| 27.10.1830 | Hucking | Kent | Assemblage | |
| 27.10.1830 | Debtling | Kent | Assemblage | |
| 27.10.1830 | Hartlip | Kent | Assemblage | |
| 27.10.1830 | Rainham | Kent | Assemblage | (Provided labour for) |
| 28.10.1830 | Sandwich | Kent | Threshing Machines (no.?) | Tumultuous assemblages |
| 28.10.1830 | Crundale | Kent | Threshing Machine | Mr. Noges. A number of people |
| 28.10.1830 | Stone (Greenhithe) | Kent | Arson | |
| 28.10.1830 | Orpington | Kent | Arson | Bean + stubble stacks destroyed. |
| 28.10.1830 | Sandwich | Kent | Arson | |
| 28.10.1830 | Hollingbourne | Kent | Assemblage | |
| 28.10.1830 | Monkton | Kent | Arson | Some days after the fire some unexploded rockets were found. |
| 28.10.1830 | Lenham (Warren Street) | Kent | Arson | |
| 28-29.10.1830 | Stodmarsh (near) | Kent | Arson | |
| 29.10.1830 | Hollingbourne | Kent | Assemblage | And adjoining parishes |
| 29.10.1830 | East Sutton | Kent | Assemblage | |
| 29.10.1830 | Langley | Kent | Assemblage | |
| 29.10.1830 | Sutton Valence (Town Sutton) | Kent | Assemblage | |
| 29.10.1830 | Doddington (Sharsted) | Kent | Arson | Faggot and hop-pole stack |
| 29.10.1830 | Sandwich | Kent | Threats of destruction | Threats also before |
| 29.10.1830 | Birchington | Kent | Arson | Possibly 28 October. House |
| 30.10.1830 | Hollingbourne | Kent | Assemblage | |
| 30.10.1830 | Sutton Valence | Kent | Assemblage | |
| 30.10.1830 | Linton | Kent | Assemblage | |
| 30.10.1830 | Chart Sutton | Kent | Assemblage | |
| 30.10.1830 | Boughton Monchelsea | Kent | Assemblage | |
| 30.10.1830 | Langley | Kent | Assemblage | Where labourers from the vicinity of Lenham met those from the Tunbridge 'side'. |
| 30.10.1830 | Littlebourne | Kent | Attack on soldiers | Party of labourers attacked, one threw a large stone at a soldier |
| 30.10.1830 | Meopham (Greenstreet Green) | Kent | Arson | Barn, corn and stack partly consumed |
| 30.10.1830 | Cooling | Kent | Strike | Labs demanded an advance of wages. Refused as already high |
| 31.10.1830 | Minster-in-Thanel | Kent | Arson | |
| 31.10.1830 | Isle of Grain | Kent | Arson | |

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|--------------|-------------------------------------|--------|-------------------------------|--|
| Late October | Firle (Place) | Sussex | Threatening letter | Lord Gage. Bailiffs + stewards must be removed or mansion will be destroyed |
| 01.11.1830 | Maidstone (Penenden Heath) | Kent | Assemblage. Grand Meeting | 400 labs and journeymen carpenters. Tricolour flag. |
| 01.11.1830 | Maidstone | Kent | Strike | Paper-makers stuck work. |
| 01.11.1830 | Wouldham | Kent | Arson | Ball of pitch, resin and tow pulled out of a smoking stack. |
| 01.11.1830 | Faversham | Kent | Assemblage | Wanted 2.6 a day |
| 01.11.1830 | Boughton | Kent | Assemblage | Wanted 2.6 a day |
| 1-2 November | Battle | Sussex | Threatening letter | Signed 'Swing'. Due to anonymous + other threats has 'gone off and left us' |
| 1-2 November | Battle | Sussex | Strike | Demanded pay be raised from 6.8 and 8.- to 12.- a week. Threatened to take the money otherwise. |
| 1-5 November | Wrotham | Kent | Arson | Major hop grower. Two days after he sent his hops to London he had his outbuildings destroyed by fire |
| 1-5 November | Kent | Kent | Threatening letters (several) | Hop growers. Writers said they would not be answerable for the property |
| 1-5 November | Hawkhurst | Kent | Threatening letter | Couched in the most horrible language. |
| 1-5 November | Frittenden | Kent | Threatening letter | Couched in the most horrible language. |
| 1-6 November | East Grinstead (area) | Sussex | Threatening letters | |
| 1-6 November | Blackheath | Kent | Arson | Attempted. After having received threatening letter. |
| 1-6 November | Eastbourne | Sussex | Threatening letters (several) | T. letters received, have taken down t. machines. Not one left in Eastbourne |
| 1-6 November | Chatham | Kent | Sentry fired at | Bullett passed through sentry box, no other damage |
| 02.11.1830 | Whitfield | Kent | Threshing Machine | Mr. Cross |
| 02.11.1830 | Coldred (Singledge) | Kent | Threshing Machine | Mr. Belsey |
| 02.11.1830 | Dover (Old Park) | Kent | Threshing Machine | Mr. Avery |
| 2-3 November | Frittenden | Kent | Assemblage | Calling for largesse |
| 2-3 November | Marden | Kent | Assemblage | Calling for largesse. |
| 2-3 November | Staplehurst | Kent | Assemblage | Labs assembled and went around parishes calling on farmers and others to give money. |
| 2-8 November | Blackheath | Kent | Threatening letter | Proprietor of a windmill, attempt made a few nights ago to set fire to mill. Signed 'Swing' as he used machinery |
| 2-8 November | Greenwich (steam mills) | Kent | Threatening Letter | Signed Swing. Stating that if he didn't stop using machinery his premises would be burnt down. |
| 03.11.1830 | Ashford direction (from Canterbury) | Kent | Arson | |

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|---------------|-------------------|--------|---------------------------------------|---|
| 03.11.1830 | Battle (near) | Sussex | Arson (suspected cases) | Correspondent saw 7 fires, 3 v. distinctly from Battle |
| 03.11.1830 | East Malling | Kent | Assemblage | Lead by Price. To increase wages |
| 03.11.1830 | Battle | Sussex | Arson | Overseer. Mr. Emary |
| 03.11.1830 | Chartham | Kent | Arson | Farm-yard |
| 04.11.1830 | Battle | Sussex | Arson | Mr. Quaife. Little destruction |
| 04.11.1830 | Battle | Sussex | Assemblage | Military sent for |
| 04.11.1830 | Icklesham | Sussex | Arson | Mr. Farncomb |
| 04.11.1830 | Battle | Sussex | Threats of arson | To set fire to town that night |
| 04.11.1830 | Battle | Sussex | Arson | Hay-stack |
| 04.11.1830 | Cranbrook | Kent | Rising | Party of 200 went to Bench |
| 05.11.1830 | East Malling | Kent | Attempt to break machines | Labourers visited his farm to break his machine. Stopped |
| 05.11.1830 | Caterham | Surrey | Arson | |
| 05.11.1830 | Brede | Sussex | Assemblage | Assistant overseer removed |
| 05.11.1830 | Brede | Sussex | Arson | Farm. |
| 05.11.1830 | Tunbridge Wells | Kent | Arson | |
| 06.11.1830 | Tunbridge Wells | Kent | Arson | |
| 06.11.1830 | Lewes (direction) | Sussex | Arson | |
| 07.11.1830 | Roberstbridge | Sussex | Arson | Barn and straw destroyed. |
| 07.11.1830 | Northfleet | Kent | Arson | Farm-yard |
| 07.11.1830 | Burwash | Sussex | Assemblage | Plan to remove ass. overseer. |
| 7-8 November | Battle | Sussex | Threatening poster | Placard put upon gates saying unless labs were paid 2.6 a day his house should be burnt. |
| 08.11.1830 | Hawkhurst | Kent | Assemblage | Labourers began to collect for a |
| 08.11.1830 | Benenden | Kent | Assemblage | <i>meeting on the 9th</i> |
| 08.11.1830 | Fairlight | Sussex | Assemblage | Labs visited diff farmers |
| 08.11.1830 | Hooe | Sussex | Assemblage | Tithe collector stopped |
| 08.11.1830 | Westwell Court | Kent | Destruction of ploughs | 1 new plough sawed asunder. 2 others recently destroyed |
| 08.11.1830 | East Sussex | Sussex | Arson | Other than Ninfield + Eastbourne fires |
| 08.11.1830 | Hooe | Sussex | Arson | Paper mill. Barn + wheat |
| 08.11.1830 | Hastings | Sussex | Assemblage | At overseers + JPs meeting |
| 08.11.1830 | Guestling | Sussex | Assemblage | Wanted higher wages |
| 08.11.1830 | Robertsbridge | Sussex | Assemblage | Farmers complicit in plan to raise wages if tithes cut |
| 08.11.1830 | Seddlescomb | Sussex | Assemblage | Wanted higher wages |
| 08.11.1830 | Wingham + Preston | Kent | Attack on watch. Rockets fired in air | One of the patrol was hit on the head by a 'spent ball'. |
| 08.11.1830 | Rye | Sussex | Assemblage | About 400 labs on wharf |
| 08.11.1830 | Eastbourne | Sussex | Arson | Barley stack consumed. |
| 8-9 November | Lewisham | Kent | Threatening letters (2) | |
| 8-12 November | Horsham (area) | Sussex | Threatening letters (many) | |
| 8-12 November | Eastry | Kent | Threshing machine | Had been advised by Bridges to destroy his machine. Only hid it. Peasantry heard, + set fire to it. |

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| 8-12 November | Eastry (Court) | Kent | Threshing machine (destroyed by farmer) | Had been threatened, feared a fire, therefore set fire to machine himself - all peasantry watched |
| 8-13 November | Lydd | Kent | Assemblage | For higher wages |
| 8-13 November | Otham | Kent | Assemblage | Press-gang tactics failed at paper-mills |
| 09.11.1830 | Rye | Sussex | Assemblage | Again assembled on the wharf |
| 09.11.1830 | Westham | Sussex | Assemblage | 'Parish officers' removed |
| 09.11.1830 | Rodmersham | Kent | Arson | Mr. Martin |
| 09.11.1830 | Hadlow (Goose Green) | Kent | Assemblage | Farmer visited by about 40 'machine-breakers' |
| 09.11.1830 | Waltham | Kent | Threat of arson | If wages not raised |
| 09.11.1830 | Brede | Sussex | Assemblage | Agreed Seddlescomb terms |
| 09.11.1830 | Battle | Sussex | Assemblage | Large body of men assembled from different parishes. |
| 09.11.1830 | Northiam | Sussex | Assemblage | Agreed Seddlescomb terms |
| 09.11.1830 | Ewhurst | Sussex | Assemblage | Agreed Seddlescomb terms |
| 09.11.1830 | Benenden | Kent | Threshing machine | |
| 09.11.1830 | East Grinstead | Sussex | Arson | |
| 09.11.1830 | Hawkhurst | Kent | Threshing machine | By people who assembled that day at Hawkhurst. |
| 09.11.1830 | Etchingham | Sussex | Assemblage | |
| 09.11.1830 | Ninfield | Sussex | Assemblage.attack | Labs removed ass. Overseer in a cart to Battle |
| 09.11.1830 | Goudhurst | Kent | Assemblage | Farmers complicit in plan to cut tithes, rents, taxes in return for higher wages |
| 09.11.1830 | Hawkhurst | Kent | Assemblage. Rising | Forced a raise in wages |
| 09.11.1830 | Salehurst (Hurst Green) | Sussex | Assemblage | 300 labs forced a tithe reduction. |
| 09.11.1830 | Benenden | Kent | Assemblage | |
| 09.11.1830 | Rolvenden | Kent | Assemblage | |
| 09.11.1830 | Udimore | Sussex | Assemblage | Strike. |
| 09.11.1830 | Tenterden | Kent | Assemblage | Strike. |
| 09.11.1830 | Peasmarsh | Sussex | Assemblage | Strike. |
| 09.11.1830 | Stone Crouch (?) | Kent (?) | Arson | 13 miles from Tunbridge. |
| 09.11.1830 | Fairlight | Sussex | Assemblage | Removed gov. of workhouse |
| 09.11.1830 | Burwash | Sussex | Assemblage | Ass. overseer removed + tithes cut. |
| 9-13 November | Sevenoaks | Kent | Assemblage(s) | For higher wages |
| 10.11.1830 | Newington-next- Hythe | Kent | Arson | Two stacks |
| 10.11.1830 | Bearsted | Kent | Arson | Farm-yard |
| 10.11.1830 (prob) | Lamberhurst | Kent | Assemblage | |
| 10.11.1830 | Ticehurst | Sussex | Assemblage | Forced a raise in wages |
| 10.11.1830 | Byfleet | Surrey | Arson | |
| 10.11.1830 | Kingston-upon- Thames | Surrey | Arson | |
| 10.11.1830 | Thurnham | Kent | Arson | Mr. Ackhurst |
| 10.11.1830 | Etchingham | Sussex | Assemblage | Labourers barracked meeting of farmers to consider wages |

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|----------------|-----------------------|--------|-------------------------------|---|
| 10.11.1830 | Maidstone (Rock Hill) | Kent | Arson | |
| 10.11.1830 | Playden | Sussex | Assemblage | Possibly the same day as the Lydd assemblage |
| 10.11.1830 | Rye | Sussex | Assemblage | |
| 10.11.1830 | Wadhurst | Sussex | Assemblage | |
| 10.11.1830 | Horsmonden | Kent | Assemblage | Came from Goudhurst. |
| 10.11.1830 | Goudhurst | Kent | Assemblage | + adjoining parishes |
| 10.11.1830 | Mayfield | Sussex | Assemblage | Or 11 November |
| 10.11.1830 | Cuckfield | Sussex | Threatening letter | |
| 10.11.1830 | Marden | Kent | Arson | Soon put out. |
| 10.11.1830 | Eastbourne | Sussex | Assemblage | |
| 10-12 November | Oxted | Surrey | Arson | |
| 11.11.1830 | East Peckham | Kent | Assemblage | See also CKS Q.SBw 124.2-6, 13-15. |
| 11.11.1830 | Cuckfield | Sussex | Threatening letter | Miller |
| 11.11.1830 | Cuckfield | Sussex | Threatening letter | |
| 11.11.1830 | Frant | Sussex | Assemblage | Part of Wadhurst party. |
| 11.11.1830 | West Peckham | Kent | Assemblage | See also CKS Q.SBw 124.2-6, 13-15. |
| 11.11.1830 | Hadlow | Kent | Assemblage | See also CKS Q.SBw 124.2-6, 13-15. |
| 11.11.1830 | Maidstone (Rock Hill) | Kent | Arson | Attempt to set fire to house |
| 11.11.1830 | Yalding | Kent | Assemblage | See also CKS Q.SBw 124.2-6, 13-15. |
| 11.11.1830 | Benenden | Kent | Assemblage | |
| 11.11.1830 | Rolvenden | Kent | Assemblage | |
| 11.11.1830 | Nettlestead | Kent | Assemblage | See also CKS Q.SBw 124.2-6, 13-15. |
| 11.11.1830 | Cobham | Surrey | Arson | |
| 11.11.1830 | Wadhurst | Sussex | Assemblage | |
| 11.11.1830 | Dallington | Sussex | Assemblage | |
| 11.11.1830 | Ditton | Surrey | Arson | |
| 11.11.1830 | Cheam | Surrey | Arson | Maybe Carshalton or Sutton. Stack destroyed. |
| 11.11.1830 | Cranbrook | Kent | Assemblage | |
| 11.11.1830 | Hawkhurst | Kent | Assemblage | |
| 11.12 November | Merstham | Surrey | Arson | |
| 11.12 November | Kingston (area) | Surrey | Arson | |
| 12.11.1830 | Mayfield | Sussex | Assemblage | Several acts of 'pilferage'. |
| 12.11.1830 | Coldwaltham | Sussex | Arson | Farm-yard |
| 12.11.1830 | Beckley | Sussex | Assemblage | Planned to occur |
| 12.11.1830 | Tonbridge | Kent | Assemblage | |
| 12.11.1830 | Walberton (East) | Sussex | Assemblage | Assistant overseer removed |
| 12.11.1830 | Rotherfield | Sussex | Assemblage | |
| 12.11.1830 | Headcorn | Kent | Assemblage | To find employment. Farmers in response made a petition to parliament |
| 12.11.1830 | Boxley | Kent | Farmers refused to pay tithes | At Tithe dinner. Only 30 of 100 attended |

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| 12.11.1830 | Petworth | Sussex | Threatening letter | Servant girl told to write letter by a 'strange' man |
| 12.11.1830 | Epsom | Surrey | Threatening letter | |
| 12.11.1830 | Otham | Kent | Arson | Person suspected of Bearsted fire seen on the road to Otham. |
| 12.11.1830 | Wadhurst | Sussex | Assemblage | |
| 12.11.1830 | Frant | Sussex | Assemblage | Part of Mayfield and Rotherfield party. |
| 12.11.1830 | Mountfield | Sussex | Assemblage | Plan to remove a principal occupier in a cart. |
| 12.11.1830 | Egham (Englefield Green) | Surrey | Arson | Pipes of engine were cut. |
| 12-13 November | Hurstpierpoint | Sussex | Assemblage(s) | Undefined number |
| 12-16 November | East Grinstead (church-yard) | Sussex | Assemblage | Upwards of 100 lads armed with clubs and sticks |
| 13.11.1830 | Cuckfield | Sussex | Threatening letter | Signed 'Syng' |
| 13.11.1830 | Boughton-under-Blean | Kent | Arson | Furze stack |
| 13.11.1830 | Guildford | Surrey | Arson | Hay rick. |
| 13.11.1830 | Bridge | Kent | Assemblages | Farmers also threatened |
| 13.11.1830 | Mayfield | Sussex | Assemblage | Most from Rotherfield |
| 13.11.1830 | Benenden | Kent | Assemblage | Presented same paper as at Rolvenden |
| 13.11.1830 | Bexhill | Sussex | Arson | |
| 13.11.1830 | Speldhurst (Groombridge) | Kent | Assemblage | Accompanied by 2 strangers on horseback |
| 13.11.1830 | Bignor - Petworth area | Sussex | Turbulent spirit | Lads complaining of high wages + being thrown onto the parish in winter |
| 13.11.1830 | Maresfield | Sussex | Attempt to excite a mob | 2 men later discovered in a pub at the Wells |
| 13.11.1830 | Kirdford | Sussex | Assemblage | 50+ men. To increase wages |
| 13.11.1830 | Withyham | Sussex | Assemblage | 300. Were resisted but said they would return |
| 13.11.1830 | Cuckfield | Sussex | Threatening letter | Thomas Agate |
| 13.11.1830 | Frant | Sussex | Assemblage | Traversed Frant, Rotherfield and Withyham encouraged by farmers |
| 13.11.1830 | Peasmarsh | Sussex | Assemblage | Planned |
| 13.11.1830 | Rotherfield | Sussex | Assemblage | Mr. Crawley made to sign a paper giving up half his tithes. |
| 13.11.1830 | Cuckfield | Sussex | Threatening letter | Wood Hanly |
| 13.11.1830 | Bodiam | Sussex | Arson | Hay stack |
| 13.11.1830 | Dallington | Sussex | Arson | Farm-yard |
| 13.11.1830 | Fletching+Newick - Maresfield | Sussex | Threatening letter | Threatening to kill him if he takes more than 50% tithes from Maresfield and Fletching |
| 13.11.1830 | Wisborough Green | Sussex | Regulation of wages | (Probably correct date) |
| 13.14 November | nr Guildford | Surrey | Arson | |
| 13.14 November | Cobham | Surrey | Arson | Shots also fired at owners. |
| 14.11.1830 | Eastchurch | Kent | 3 ploughs destroyed | |

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| 14.11.1830 | Hernhill | Kent | Arson | Furze stack of Dean + Chapter |
| 14.11.1830 | Petworth | Sussex | Small assemblage | Violent threats made to overseer |
| 14.11.1830 (prob) | Tenterden | Kent | Assemblage | Mob collected there. |
| 14.11.1830 | Burwash | Sussex | Assemblage | Planned |
| 14.11.1830 | Ringmer | Sussex | Assemblage. Rising | After Church assailed principal farmers about wages and manhandled the overseer |
| 14.11.1830 | Canterbury | Kent | Riot | Paupers broke out of workhouse after a dispute |
| 14.11.1830 | Albury | Surrey | Arson | |
| 14-20 November | East Grinstead | Sussex | Arson (multiple cases) | Several stacks |
| 14-20 November | East Grinstead | Sussex | Threshing machines | Several broken |
| mid November | Chiddingfold | Surrey | Threats to farmers not to pay tithes | Farmers therefore too 'afraid' to pay tithe collector |
| mid November | Catsfield | Sussex | Assemblage | |
| 15.11.1830 | Thakeham | Sussex | Assemblage | |
| 15.11.1830 | Ringmer | Sussex | Assemblage | 150 people called on farmers. Lord Gage set a future meeting |
| 15.11.1830 | Ham Street | Kent | Assemblage | Started to assemble. |
| 15.11.1830 | ?? Ham Street ?? | Kent | Threshing machines (2) | |
| 15.11.1830 | Gapton (Yapton?) | Sussex | Assemblage | Crowd also from Felpham, Bognor and Bersted. |
| 15.11.1830 | Crowborough | Sussex | Assemblage | Labs from Rotherfield and Crowborough |
| 15.11.1830 | Felpham | Sussex | Assemblage | Visited farmers urging them to raise wages |
| 15.11.1830 | Withyham | Sussex | Assemblage | Mostly labs from Rotherfield and Crowborough |
| 15.11.1830 | Sullington | Sussex | Assemblage | Possibly 14 November |
| 15.11.1830 | Uckfield (area) | Sussex | Assemblage | Troops called |
| 15.11.1830 | Crowborough (part of Rotherfield?) | Sussex | Threshing machine + other farm machinery | Mr. Howis |
| 15.11.1830 | Rotherfield | Sussex | Assemblage | Mostly labs from Rotherfield and Crowborough: |
| 15.11.1830 | West Chiltington | Sussex | Assemblage | Riotous assembly for an hour |
| 15.11.1830 | Worthing (+ area) | Sussex | Assemblage | 200 men assembled at 8pm |
| 15.11.1830 | Arundel.Bognor | Sussex | Assemblage | Labs armed with clubs on the road from Bognor to Arundel. |
| 15.11.1830 | Deal (neighbourhood) | Kent | Wage tumult | Strong party of countrymen |
| 15.11.1830 | Canterbury | Kent | Riot | Paupers from workhouse paraded the streets |
| 15.11.1830 | Warminghurst | Sussex | Assemblage | Possibly 14 November |
| 15.11.1830 | Broadwater | Sussex | Assemblage | Demanded a reduction in tithes. Then went to Worthing. |
| 15.11.1830 | Thanet (Alland Grange) | Kent | Arson | Sainfoin stack |
| 15.11.1830 | Goudhurst | Kent | Assemblage | |
| 15.11.1830 | Biddenden | Kent | Assemblages | |
| 15.11.1830 | Woodchurch | Kent | Assemblages | |

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| 15.11.1830 | High Halden | Kent | Assemblages | |
| 15.11.1830 | Herstmonceaux (Gardner Street) | Sussex | Rising. Assemblage | Twice visited Rectory + demanded tithe reductions. Committed several assaults |
| 15.11.1830 | Shoreham | Sussex | Assemblage | 100+ proceeded to Ringmer |
| 15.11.1830 | Walberton | Sussex | Arson | Shed |
| 15.11.1830 | Ashington | Sussex | Arson | Barn |
| 15.11.1830 | Sturry + Fordwich | Kent | Incitement | 12-14 'idle fellows' endeavoured to excite labs |
| 15.11.1830 | Lewes (+ area) | Sussex | Assemblage | 70-100 labs from Ringmer direction proceeded to farmers in area demanding 2.6 and destruction of machinery. |
| 15.11.1830 | Bersted | Sussex | Assemblage | Demanded higher wages |
| 15.11.1830 | Felpham, Bognor, Bersted and Gaptori | Sussex | Threshing machines (sev.) | <i>Almost all threshing machines destroyed.</i> |
| 15.11.1830 | Ockley | Surrey | Arson | Wenham his employer. Not guilty. |
| 15.11.1830 | Buxted | Sussex | Assemblage | Demanded higher wages |
| 15-17 November | Billingshurst | Sussex | Assemblage | Labs went in body to make their claims at Vestry |
| 15-18 November | Petworth (area) | Sussex | Threshing machines | Destroyed by the mob 'but generally by farmers themselves' |
| 15-18 November | Romney Marsh | Kent | Threatening letters (several) | |
| 15-19 November | Donnington (+ area) | Sussex | Threshing machines (destroyed by farmers) | Pulled to pieces and laid out in the orchard: others have followed his example |
| 15-19 November | Herne | Kent | Threatening letter | Ordering him to stop using his t. machine. Did so |
| 15-19 November | Barcombe | Sussex | Assemblage | Wages were advanced. |
| 15-19 November | Chailey ? (Cooksbridge) | Sussex | Assemblage | Wages were advanced. |
| 15-19 November | Petworth | Sussex | Threatening letter | Picked up in town |
| 15-20 November | Rye | Sussex | Threatening letters | |
| 15-21 November | Hickstead | Sussex | Animal maiming | 3 pigs poisoned |
| 15-21 November | Tunbridge Wells | Kent | Threatening letters (several) | Therefore meting on Monday to swear in specials: many refused saying labs had no disposition to riot |
| 15-22 November | Canterbury (all villages near) | Kent | Threatening letters | Threatening destruction if they yield to demands of tithe collectors. All signed 'Swing' |
| 16.11.1830 | Chichester | Sussex | Assemblage | Labs who had assembled day before at Bognor etc. |
| 16.11.1830 | Hailsham | Sussex | Assemblage | 7-800 people. Received a promise of higher wages. |
| 16.11.1830 | Stodmarsh | Kent | Arson | Field rubbish |
| 16.11.1830 | Hamstreet | Kent | Assemblage | Regulated wages. Proceeded to Ruckinge |

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| 16.11.1830 | Warnham (Kingsfold) | Sussex | Arson | |
| 16.11.1830 | Egham (direction) | Surrey | Arson | Fire seen from Hampton towards Egham |
| 16.11.1830 | Hythe | Kent | Expected riot | Threat made to demolish gaol |
| 16.11.1830 | Cranbrook | Kent | Tumult | Those who refused to be sworn as special constables |
| 16.11.1830 | Horsham (probably) | Sussex | Arson | Seen by passengers on the London-Brighton mail-coach. |
| 16.11.1830 | Bilsington | Kent | Assemblage | Higher wages + allowances |
| 16.11.1830 | East Molesey | Surrey | Arson | By incendiary ball |
| 16.11.1830 | Thakeham | Sussex | Threshing machine (destroyed by farmer) | At tithe dinner the day before labs threatened that they would destroy his threshing machine the next day |
| 16.11.1830 | Felpham | Sussex | Strike | Armed with large sticks |
| 16.11.1830 | Nutbourne (Pulborough) | Sussex | Assemblage | Mob of 500 assembled |
| 16.11.1830 | Fulking | Sussex | Threatening letter | Re wages and use of machines |
| 16.11.1830 | Chart (Great Chart?) | Kent | Assemblage | Same body as at Ruckinge. |
| 16.11.1830 | Ruckinge | Kent | Assemblage | Attacked Civil Powers |
| 16.11.1830 | West Hoathly | Sussex | Arson | Farm-yard |
| 16.11.1830 | Augmering | Sussex | Arson | |
| 16.11.1830 | Cuckfield | Sussex | Riot | In response to the apprhn. of a boy for sending t. letters |
| 16.11.1830 | Withyham | Sussex | Assemblage | |
| 16.11.1830 | Frant | Sussex | Assemblage | Large party passed through Frant on way to Rotherfield to destroy Mr. Cockram's t. machine |
| 16.11.1830 | Rusper | Sussex | Arson | |
| 16.11.1830 | Rotherfield | Sussex | Assemblage | |
| 16.11.1830 | Chichester (neighbourhood) | Sussex | Levying money | Small parties demanding provisions or money. |
| 16.11.1830 | Hawkhurst | Kent | Assemblage | Some people from Ham Street |
| 16.11.1830 | Wisborough Green | Sussex | Assemblage | Demanded an increase in wages. Date probably correct |
| 16.11.1830 | Pulborough | Sussex | Assemblage | Demanded an increase in wages. Date probably correct |
| 16-19 November | Augmering | Sussex | Arson | Rick. |
| 17.11.1830 | Ham Street | Kent | Assemblage | 'Busily engaged in destroying the property of those who did not agree to their demands'. |
| 17.11.1830 | Chichester | Sussex | Assemblage | Market day |
| 17.11.1830 | Horsham | Sussex | Assemblage | Labourers from all parts. |
| 17.11.1830 | Harting | Sussex | Assemblage | Visited farmers + gentry to demand higher wages |
| 17.11.1830 | Preston | Kent | Arson | Parsonage barn |
| 17.11.1830 | Laughton | Sussex | Assemblage | Met by Earl of Chichester |
| 17.11.1830 | Goodwood | Sussex | Assemblage | Same |
| 17.11.1830 | Horsham (nr.) | Sussex | Threatening letter | Signed 'Swing'. |
| 17.11.1830 | Fishbourne (Salt Hill) | Sussex | Threshing machines (3) | Also demanded money and committed other wanton acts. |

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| 17.11.1830 | Pagham | Sussex | Assemblage | Magistrates and specials convinced them to disperse. |
| 17.11.1830 | Chart + Ruckinge | Kent | Assemblage | Assembled again. 'Seem more determined than any we have yet heard of'. |
| 17.11.1830 | Bosham + neighbouring villages | Sussex | Threshing machines (6or8!) | Party of 200 were pressed by those from Chichester |
| 17.11.1830 | Ringmer | Sussex | Assemblage | Lord Gage met 200 labs as planned. Labs removed grindstone at workhouse |
| 17.11.1830 | Ham Street area? Ashford area? | Kent | Destruction of property | Engaged in destroying the property of those who did not agree to their demands. |
| 17.11.1830 | Rogate | Sussex | Assemblage | To demand higher wages |
| 17.11.1830 | Arundel | Sussex | Assemblage | Large body of armed labs |
| 17.11.1830 | Eartham | Sussex | Assemblage | 4-500 from Dale Park on way to Halnaker, nr. Guildford. |
| 17.11.1830 | Eastergate | Sussex | Money with menaces | |
| 17-23 November | Nutbourne | Sussex | Threatening letter | Sent by Mr. Polliway, a decayed Petworth merchant |
| 18.11.1830 | Compton | Sussex | Assemblage | First met at Rectory |
| 18.11.1830 | Crowhurst | Sussex | Assemblage | Tax collector stopped |
| 18.11.1830 | Hellingly (Horsebridge) | Sussex | Assemblage | A serious disturbance |
| 18.11.1830 | Selsey | Sussex | Assemblage | Met in a great body |
| 18.11.1830 | West Marden | Sussex | Assemblage | 1 st visited Rector |
| 18.11.1830 | Dallington | Sussex | Petition (agst taxes, tithes) | By farmers re inaffordability of higher wages |
| 18.11.1830 | Hollington | Sussex | Assemblage | |
| 18.11.1830 | Houghton | Sussex | Threshing machine (destroyed by farmer) | Threatened to burn his premises if he resisted. |
| 18.11.1830 | East Dean | Sussex | Arson | Barn containing a t.machine |
| 18.11.1830 | West Dean | Sussex | Arson | |
| 18.11.1830 | Brighton (Barracks) | Sussex | Attempt to break open powder magazine | Of the lifeguards barracks |
| 18.11.1830 | Worthing | Sussex | Sale of inflammatory placards | Exciting disturbance. |
| 18.11.1830 | Aldingbourne | Sussex | Assemblage | More than 200 people |
| 18.11.1830 | Folkestone | Kent | Robbery.Attack | Broke into house by using part of a plough. Threatened death unless they gave money |
| 18.11.1830 | Hellingly | Sussex | Assemblage | Nearly a 1,000 assembled to visit Lord Gage at Firle Place |
| 18.11.1830 | Parishes west of Chichester | Sussex | Assemblages | So numerous were assemblages that authorities unable to suppress them. |
| 18.11.1830 | Herne | Kent | Assemblage | Frustrated attempt to destroy a threshing machine |
| 18.11.1830 | Boxgrove (Halnaker) | Sussex | Assemblage | 200 assembled |

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| 18.11.1830 | Beeding | Sussex | Assemblage | Gained money by menaces from Rev. Ventris |
| 18.11.1830 | Horsham | Sussex | Assemblage | Demanded higher wages + lower rents. Desecrated church |
| 18.11.1830 | Southover | Sussex | Arson | Farm-yard |
| 18.11.1830 | Minster in Sheppy (Birstall Hall) | Kent | Threatening Letter | Threatening arson. Signed 'Swing' |
| 18.11.1830 | Boxgrove | Sussex | Assemblage | 100+ persons |
| 18.11.1830 | Manhood (between Chichester and the sea) | Sussex | Assemblage | Several parties traversing the 'Manhood' |
| 18.11.1830 | Westbourne | Sussex | Assemblage | Labs met here and broke t. machines there + Hampshire |
| 18.11.1830 | Arundel | Sussex | Assemblage | To demand higher wages |
| 18.11.1830 | Leysdown | Kent | Arson | Single stack |
| 18.11.1830 | Bosham + area | Sussex | Assemblage | Westbourne machine breakers |
| 18.11.1830 | Fishbourne | Sussex | Threshing Machine | |
| 18.11.1830 | Ewhurst | Sussex | Assemblage | To attempt a tithe reduction |
| 18.11.1830 | Framfield (direction) | Sussex | Arson | |
| 19.11.1830 | Abinger | Surrey | Assemblage | Group from Rusper went to Wooton via Abinger. |
| 19.11.1830 | Lenham | Kent | Assemblage | Planned. For higher wages. |
| 19.11.1830 | Ockley | Surrey | Assemblage | To prevent payment of tithes |
| 19.11.1830 | Wootton | Surrey | Assemblage | To prevent payment of tithes |
| 19.11.1830 | Itchingfield | Sussex | Assemblage | Farmers complicit in plan to lower tithes |
| 19.11.1830 | Arundel (+ vicinity) | Sussex | Assemblage | Levied contributions and made demands on individuals. |
| 19.11.1830 | Rusper | Sussex | Assemblage | Aided by neighbouring parishes |
| 19.11.1830 | Ore | Sussex | Assemblage | Labs forced a rise in wages |
| 19.11.1830 | Lewes (vicinity) | Sussex | Circulation of seditious handbills | Two men arrested |
| 19.11.1830 | Woking | Surrey | Assemblage | To lower tithes |
| 19.11.1830 | Horsham | Sussex | Assemblage | To increase wages + lower tithes |
| 19.11.1830 | Reigate | Surrey | Arson | Single rick |
| 19.11.1830 | Westbourne | Sussex | Threshing machine | Was first visited at midnight on 17 Nov: threatened to destroy her t. machine: was very frightened so promised she would do so herself. Didn't. On Friday morning a mob of 60+ returned and broke machine. |
| 19.11.1830 | Rotherfield | Sussex | Assemblage | Attacked civil + military force |
| 19.11.1830 | Westbourne (Hambrook) | Sussex | Arson | A barn and two ricks |
| 20.11.1830 | Herne | Kent | Shots fired at watch | Were on patrol when they were fired at |
| 20.11.1830 | Steyning | Sussex | Assemblage | Mob entered Steyning + forced a tithe reduction |
| 20.11.1830 | Petworth | Sussex | Arson | Servant who sent earlier threatening letter |
| 20.11.1830 | Sevenoaks (Riverhead) | Kent | Arson | A suspicious character seen |
| 20.11.1830 | Hamsey | Sussex | Meeting of farmers | Wages increased to prevent a rising |

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| 20.11.1830 | Hern Hill (Dargate) | Kent | Arson | Farm-yard |
| 20.11.1830 | Norwood | Surrey | Arson | Farm-yard |
| 20.11.1830 | Beeding | Sussex | Assemblage | From Steyning. Forced a tithe reduction |
| 20.11.1830 | Margate | Kent | Threshing machine | Farmer intended to destroy machine but mob did so |
| 22-25 November | Berwick | Sussex | Threatening letters (2) | Saying that if he didn't destroy his t. machine his stacks would be fired |
| 22-27 November | Chatham | Kent | Threatening letters (several) | |
| 22-28 November | Putney (area) | Surrey | Threat | Man threatened to burn his stacks as his farm would employ 3 farmers |
| 21.11.1830 | Blean | Kent | Arson | Clover stack |
| 21.11.1830 | Arundel (Castle) | Sussex | Arson | Frustrated attempt |
| 21.11.1830 | Boughton Aluph | Kent | Arson | Large straw stack fired. T. machine on premises |
| 21.11.1830 | Sullington | Sussex | Arson stopped | Frustrated attempt (not inc) |
| 21.11.1830 | Crowhurst | Sussex | Arson | Hay stack |
| 21.11.1830 | Seal | Kent | Arson | Mill with barns |
| 21.11.1830 | Findon | Sussex | Arson | Stack (150 quarters of oats). Town engine dispatched. |
| 22.11.1830 | Steyning | Sussex | Assemblage | Forced an increase in wages |
| 22.11.1830 | Cowfold | Sussex | Assemblage | Wages fixed by mob. Clergyman offered a 15% reduction in tithe: mob rejected it as not enough. |
| 22.11.1830 | Dorking | Surrey | Assemblage | Great riot. JPs assaulted and insulted. Military helped take five prisoners. Mob dispersed. Believe will go to Epsom next. |
| 22.11.1830 | Twineham (Hicksted) | Sussex | Assemblage | Peasantry rose to raise wages. Farmers were forced to oblige. |
| 22.11.1830 | Woodnesborough | Kent | Arson | Two clover stacks were fired. Situated half a mile from White's residence |
| 22.11.1830 | Sullington? (Falworth) | Sussex | Arson | Few stacks destroyed. |
| 22.11.1830 | Horley | Surrey | Assemblage | Implicated in Dorking assemblage (see examination of James Razell) |
| 22.11.1830 | Battle | Sussex | Seditious lecture | After Cobbett's fashion. |
| 22.11.1830 | Charlwood | Surrey | Assemblage | Implicated in Dorking assemblage (see examination of Richard Roffey) |
| 22.11.1830 | Chilham | Kent | Refusal of farmers to pay tithes at audit | Resolved to cut small tithes by 20%, if Mr. Tylden doesn't comply he might seize the effects. Other parishes planning to do the same |
| 22.11.1830 | Poynings | Sussex | Assemblage | Called on Dr. Holland to reduce his tithes |
| 22.11.1830 | Minster in Thanet (Alland Grange) | Kent | Threshing machines (2) | About 70 men. Assaulted farmer + policeman |
| 22.11.1830 | Newdigate | Surrey | Assemblage | Implicated in Dorking assemblage |

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|----------------|-----------------------|---------------|---|--|
| 22.11.1830 | Blean | Kent | Arson | Farm-yard |
| 22.11.1830 | Nuthurst | Surrey | Assemblage | Gentlemen and farmers meeting, 500 men assembled |
| 22.11.1830 | Leigh | Surrey | Assemblage | Instigated by Sussex people, + assembled to go to Dorking. Had raised wages a fortnight ago. |
| 22.11.1830 | Worthing | Sussex | Assemblage | Demanded wages were raised |
| 22.11.1830 | Lancing | Sussex | Assemblage | Same as at Worthing |
| 23.11.1830 | Clayton | Sussex | Assemblage (planned) | To dictate the rate of wages |
| 23.11.1830 | Broadwater | Sussex | Threatening letter | Vicar of Broadwater |
| 23.11.1830 | Twineham | Sussex | Arson | Had left Hickstead meeting before inc. wages agreed to |
| 23.11.1830 | Speldhurst (Rusthall) | Kent | Arson | Hay-stack |
| 23.11.1830 | Bexhill | Sussex | Arson | Barn |
| 24.11.1830 | Newick | Sussex | Assemblage | 100+ demanding higher wages |
| 24.11.1830 | Henfield | Sussex | Assemblage | Assembled at 9am. Some from Woodmancote + other parishes |
| 24.11.1830 | Hastings | Sussex | Assault on nightly watch | 2 men armed with sticks |
| 24.11.1830 | Framfield | Sussex | Assemblage | Violent press tactics deployed |
| 24.11.1830 | Margate (area) | Kent | Threshing machines (6) | Same party as at Alland Grange |
| 24.11.1830 | Woodmancote | Sussex (East) | Assemblage | Went to Henfield |
| 24.11.1830 | Wrotham | Kent | Assemblage | Removed assistant overseer |
| 24.11.1830 | Treyford | Sussex | Assemblage | 30 men visited Hortsdean |
| 24.11.1830 | Shermanbury | Sussex | Assemblage | Forced an increase in wages |
| 25.11.1830 | Berwick | Sussex | Arson | Barn-yard |
| 25.11.1830 | Petworth | Sussex | Assemblage | From Kirdford |
| 25.11.1830 | Kirdford | Sussex | Assemblage | Went to Egremont to get wages raised |
| 25.11.1830 | Hastingleigh | Kent | Arson | Trefoil stack |
| 25.11.1830 | Oxted | Surrey | Assemblage | From Limpsfield |
| 25.11.1830 | Limpsfield | Surrey | Assemblage | Proceeded to Oxted |
| 25.11.1830 | Slinfold | Sussex | Assemblage | Forced a rise in wages + allowances. NB. report says 'S'lidford' |
| 25.11.1830 | Egham | Surrey | Arson | Barn |
| 25-28 November | Sevenoaks | Kent | Assemblage | Tithe demonstration. |
| 26.11.1830 | Battle | Sussex | Arson | Barn |
| 26.11.1830 | Barcombe | Sussex | Assemblage | Farmers complicit in rising |
| 26.11.1830 | Brighton | Sussex | Att to break into office of guardians of the poor | Nothing stolen. |
| 26.11.1830 | Hellingly | Sussex | Arson | Hay stack |
| 26.11.1830 | Margate (area) | Kent | Planned attack | Plan to destroy the workhouse |
| 26-30 November | Battle | Sussex | Letter instigating arson | Letter addressed to Mr. Cross but opened by a labourers' son, who said he picked it up at Hurst Green. |
| 27.11.1830 | Margate | Kent | Assemblage | Planned |

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|----------------|------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|--|
| 27.11.1830 | Fletching (Danehill) | Sussex | Arson | Windmill |
| 28.11.1830 | Epsom (nr. Nork) | Surrey | Arson | Hay-stack |
| 28.11.1830 | Merton (or Wandsworth) | Surrey | Arson | Patrol saw a man attempting to set fire to stacks |
| 28.11.1830 | South Heighton | Sussex | Arson | Farm-yard |
| 28.11.1830 | Denton | Sussex | Arson | Stack |
| 28.11.1830 | Banstead | Surrey | Arson | Stack-yard |
| 28.11.1830 | Kingston | Sussex (West) | Arson | Wheat-stack |
| 28.11.1830 | Banstead | Surrey | Arson | Rick-yard |
| 29.11.1830 | West Hoathly | Sussex | Assemblage | 100 peaceable labourers at tithe audit |
| 29.11.1830 | Alfriston | Sussex | Assault | Thomas Relfe, Constable |
| 29.11.1830 | Bredhurst – Rainham | Kent | Assemblage | Woodmen assembled at Bredhurst and came into Rainham. Demanded higher wages |
| 29.11.1830 | Seaford (neighbourhood) | Sussex | Threatening letters (4) | All same handwriting, paper + Brighton postmark |
| 29.11.1830 | Cobham | Kent | Assemblage | From Meopham |
| 29.11.1830 | Meopham | Kent | Assemblage | Were reported as planning to go towards Cobham |
| 30.11.1830 | Hurstpierpoint (? - unclear) | Sussex | Animal maiming | Pigs poisoned. Several other similar instances to cattle |
| 30.11.1830 | Wisborough Green | Sussex | Assemblage + assault | Pressed by the Kirdford party |
| 30.11.1830 | Kirdford | Sussex | Assemblage | Wanted same wages as elsewhere |
| Late November | Banstead (neighbourhood) | Surrey | Threatening letters (several) | 'Swing' letters. |
| Late November | Thanet | Kent | Threatening letters (several) | 'Swing' letters still received |
| Early December | Godstone (Burnt Stub) | Surrey | Threatening letter | |
| Early December | Chessington | Surrey | Threatening letter | |
| Early December | Godstone | Surrey | Threatening letter | Overseer |
| 01.12.1830 | Battle | Sussex | Arson | Lodge |
| 1-4 December | Deptford | Kent | Threatening letters (several) | Says 700 men will march from Sevenoaks to Deptford to destroy all the machinery in the factories |
| 1-4 December | Greenwich | Kent | Threatening letters (several) | |
| 1-6 December | Lewes (area) | Sussex | Threatening letters (several) | Require immediate demolition of t. machines |
| 02.12.1830 | Broadwater | Sussex | Threatening letter | Landed proprietor + occupier |
| 02.12.1830 | Battle | Sussex | Arson | Haystack |
| 02.12.1830 | Worthing | Sussex | Threatening letter | Gentleman |
| 2-3 December | Hailsham | Sussex | Threatening poster | Against the use of t. machines |
| 03.12.1830 | Aylesford | Kent | Threatening letters (many) | To farmers + labourers calling on them to meet. |
| 03.12.1830 | Battle | Sussex | Arson | In next month another 8 fires. |

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|----------------|---------------------------|--------|--|---|
| 3-4 December | Dartford | Kent | Assemblage | Planned |
| 04.12.1830 | West Chiltington-Petworth | Sussex | Assemblage | Labourers attended Bench to press claim for higher wages |
| 04.12.1830 | Aylesford | Kent | Arson | £1,000 damage, inc £400 of hops |
| 05.12.1830 | Augmering | Sussex | Attack | Constable on duty |
| 05.12.1830 | West Chiltington | Sussex | Confrontation with parish surveyor | Over a wage agreement |
| 06.12.1830 | Oxshot | Surrey | Arson | House + outbuildings |
| 6 December | Salehurst | Sussex | Threat to farmers not to pay more than 50% tithe | Not reported as to what actually occurred |
| 6-8 December | Chatham (neighbourhood) | Kent | Assemblage | Woodmen on strike, asking farmers for an increase in wages |
| 07.12.1830 | Cliffe | Kent | Arson | Poss. 30 Nov. Barn + outhouse |
| 07.12.1830 | Bredhurst (? – unclear) | Kent | Assemblage | Strike. Attempt to increase wages |
| 08.12.1830 | Hernhill | Kent | Arson | Furze faggots |
| 8-9 December | Brighton | Sussex | Assemblage | Meeting of the Directors and Guardians: paupers assembled outside poorhouse in a very riotous manner: great rush to get in: several windows broken: intimidated an increase in wages. |
| 09.12.1830 | Worthing | Sussex | Threatening letter | Signed 'Swing' |
| 10.12.1830 | Hadlow (North Frith) | Kent | Arson | Barn + coach house |
| 11.12.1830 | Ospringe | Kent | Arson | Occasional and summer retreat cottage of a gentleman. |
| 12.12.1830 | Cheam | Surrey | Arson | 2nd of 2 fires on WP Taunton's premises |
| 13.12.1830 | Ockley | Surrey | Arson | Barn inc. oats |
| 13.12.1830 | Bolney.Cuckfield | Sussex | Arson | Barn + outbuildings |
| 14.12.1830 | Clayton (Hassocks) | Sussex | Assemblage | Made Halliwell cut tithes 25% |
| 14.12.1830 | Wingham | Kent | Arson | Gratten stack |
| 15.12.1830 | Guildford | Surrey | Arson | Barn |
| 15.12.1830 | Chichester | Sussex | Meeting to petition parliament | Radical petition raised |
| 18.12.1830 | Oxted | Surrey | Arson | Stack of faggots. |
| 18.12.1830 | Chiddingly | Sussex | Arson | Large wheat stack (14 acres) |
| 19.12.1830 | Woldingham (Warlingham?) | Surrey | Arson | Straw threshed by machine |
| 19.12.1830 | Cuckfield area | Sussex | Arson (2) | Seen from the mail-coach |
| 20.12.1830 | Charing | Kent | Arson | Belongs to Lord Sondes |
| 20.12.1830 | Chiddingly | Sussex | Arson | Barn inc. winnowing machine. |
| 21.12.1830 | Pulborough (area) | Sussex | Arson | |
| 22-28 December | Dorking (neighbourhood) | Surrey | Radical handbills | Printed by Cohen, editor of the <i>Brighton Guardian</i> |
| 26.12.1830 | Amberly | Sussex | Assault | On a special constable |
| 27.12.1830 | Funtington | Sussex | Arson | Farm-yard |
| 27.12.1830 | Parham (Cootham) | Sussex | Arson | Farm-yard |
| Late December | Bromley | Kent | Radical lectures | Disciple of Cobbett |

Appendix 2.1: 1st Grain Crisis, Incidents 1794 – 1796

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Incident</i> | <i>Place</i> | <i>County</i> | <i>Details</i> |
|------------------|---|------------------------|---------------|--|
| 11.11.1794 | Food Riot (stoppage) & Strike | Funtington | Sussex | Waggons stopped + demanded wages of 2/- a day |
| 6.12.1794 | Arson | Heyshot | Sussex | Barn |
| Late Dec 1794 | Threatening letter | Petworth | Sussex | Miller |
| Late Dec 1794 | Threatening letter | Petworth | Sussex | Farmer |
| 22.1.1795 | Food Riot | Lamberhurst | Kent | |
| 26.1.1795 | Food Riot | Lamberhurst | Kent | <i>Taxation populaire</i> |
| 7.2.1795 | Food Riot & Strike | Edenbridge | Kent | Demanded higher wages + lower wheat prices |
| 17.2.1795 | Food Riot | Bexhill (Sidley Green) | Sussex | Stoppage of a miller's cart by women |
| Early March 1795 | Malicious damage | Lewes | Sussex | Loose posts, large stones placed in the middle of the road. ('some evil-disposed persons') |
| Mid April 1795 | Strike | Deptford | Kent | |
| Mid July 1795 | Strike | Deptford | Kent | Have left their work. |
| 2.3.1795 | Food Riot | Worth | Sussex | <i>Taxation populaire</i> |
| 7.3.1795 | Assemblage (37 paupers complain to Lewes bench) | Hurstpierpoint | Sussex | Came in a body from Hurstpierpoint to magistrates sitting at Lewes to apply for relief as parish officers had only referred them to their keeper |
| 16-20.3.1795 | Strike | Chatham | Kent | Shipwrights |
| 21.3.1795 | Food Riot | Chatham | Kent | <i>Taxation populaire</i> (shipwrights + militia) |
| 28.3.1795 | Food Riot | Canterbury | Kent | <i>Taxation populaire</i> (militia) |
| Before 13.4.1795 | Threatening handbills | Chichester | Sussex | Spread in town + neighbourhood calling on populace to riot |
| 13.4.1795 | Food Riot | Chichester | Sussex | <i>Taxation populaire</i> (country people + militia) |
| 13.4.1795 | Food Riot | Arundel | Sussex | Complaint by militia that they could not subsist |
| 16.4.1795 | Food Riot | Brighton | Sussex | Women |
| 16.4.1795 | Food Riot | Petworth | Sussex | Country people received countenance by militia |
| 16.4.1795 | Food Riot | Seaford | Sussex | <i>Taxation populaire</i> (inc Militia) |
| Before 21.4.1795 | Food Riot | Littlehampton | Sussex | |
| 23.4.1795 | Food Riot | Guildford | Surrey | <i>Taxation populaire</i> (inc Militia) |
| 29.4.1795 | Arson | Carshalton | Surrey | Barn |
| Late April 1795 | Threatening letters & Seditious handbills | Hastings | Sussex | Circulated in town and neighbourhood |
| 4.5.1795 | Food Riot | Brenchley | Kent | Demonstration against retailers |
| 5.5.1795 | Arson | Teynham | Kent | Barn |
| 2.6.1795 | Arson | Worth | Sussex | Barn |
| Mid June 1795 | Threatening/seditious letter/ handbill | Lewes | Sussex | Stuck up in different parts of town |
| Mid June 1795 | Threatening/seditious letter/ handbill | Chichester | Sussex | Stuck up in different parts of town |
| Early Aug 1795 | Attack on French prisoners | Guildford | Surrey | As they received allowances but locals did not – due to high prices |
| 23.8.1795 | Arson | Woolwich | Kent | Malt House |
| 24.8.1795 | Food Riot | Chatham | Kent | Several houses destroyed. Order restored by troops from Canterbury |
| 6.9.1795 | Arson | Lenham | Kent | Faggot stack |
| 20.9.1795 | Arson | Lenham | Kent | Faggot stack |

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| 7.10.1795 | Food Riot | Chichester | Sussex | <i>Taxation populaire</i> |
| Late Nov 1795 | Strike | Monkton | Kent | Over a mix of wheaten + barley bread & wages |
| Dec 1795 | Threatening letters | Hastings | Sussex | Several farmers in neighbourhood |
| 19.1.1796 | Arson | Hastings | Sussex | Wheat rick |
| Mid Dec 1795 | Malicious damage | Falmer (Brighton Turnpike) | Sussex | Some ill-intentioned person/s took a number of wattles from the adjoining ground and placed them in a double row across the road within a quarter mile of Lewes. Were discovered and removed. |
| Early Jan 1796 | Plant maiming | Ospringe (Davington) | Kent | (advert) Many people have of late pulled down the hedges and broken the fences, turned the stock into the seed, cutting down green wood, breaking dead wood out of stocks in the woods and hedges. One guinea reward. |
| 28.2.1796 | Arson | Woodmancote | Sussex | Furze stack |
| Mid-Late March 1796 | Strike | Chatham | Kent | In consequence of an order for them to use one-third of the toppings of the hemp in spinning. Refused to comply and have yet to return to work. |
| 12.4.1796 | Food Riot | Petworth | Sussex | Opposed by regular army |
| Mid April 1796 | Food Riot | Shoreham | Sussex | Farmers assailed by stones and otherwise ill-treated after market |
| 4.5.1796 | Food Riot | Chichester | Sussex | Millers |
| 7.5.1796 | Food Riot | Chichester | Sussex | Jail |
| 11.5.1796 | Food Riot | Hastings | Sussex | 150 women + girls targeted bakers |
| 3.6.1796 | Animal maiming | Friston | Sussex | Tongue cut out of a horse. Was in a field of Mr Chambers. Strong suspicions at to the culprit, has escaped more than once before. |
| Mid June 1796 | Food Riot | Rye | Sussex | <i>Taxation populaire</i> by women + boys |

Appendix 2.2: 2nd Grain Crisis, Incidents 1799-1801

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Incident</i> | <i>Place</i> | <i>County</i> | <i>Details</i> |
|----------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------|---|
| 26.11.1799 | Arson | Lancing | Sussex | Barn + wheat rick |
| 7.12.1799 | Arson | East Greenwich | Kent | Barns |
| Mid Jan 1800 | Threatening letter | Horsted Keynes | Sussex | Overseer. Stacks would be burnt unless corn was sold to the poor within a fortnight at 1/- a gallon |
| 15.2.1800 | Arson | Appledore | Kent | Against overseers. Poor houses |
| 17.2.1800 | Food Riot | Petworth | Sussex | 50 labourers complained families were nearly starving |
| 19.2.1800 | Animal maiming | Mersham | Kent | Gelding stabbed + killed |
| 22.2.1800 | Food Riot | Lewes | Sussex | |
| 1.3.1800 | Food Riot | Westerham | Kent | |
| 6.3.1800 | Food Riot | Dorking | Surrey | |
| Early Mar 1800 | Threatening letters (several) | 'in different parts' | Sussex | Almost daily dropped |
| Late Mar 1800 | Threatening letters (3) | Eastbourne | Sussex | Farmers |
| Late Mar 1800 | Threatening letter | Lewes | Sussex | |
| Late Mar 1800 | Threatening letter | Lewes | Sussex | Inspector of the Corn Market |
| 5.4.1800 | Arson | Friston | Sussex | Wheat stack |
| 12.4.1800 | Arson | Beeding | Sussex | Wheat stack |
| 16.4.1800 | Threatening letter | East Dean | Sussex | Farmer |
| 18.4.1800 | Food Riot | Ardingly | Sussex | |
| Mid April 1800 | Malicious damage | Linsted + adjoining parishes | Kent | Iron work wrenched from gates, ploughs, harrows and other farming utensils; hedges, fences, gates, posts and rails broken down; trees, woods and shaws cut down and destroyed etc |
| 4.5.1800 | Arson | Wartling | Sussex | |
| 29.5.1800 | Plant maiming | Framfield | Sussex | 1,300 hills of hops |
| 2.6.1800 | Malicious damage | West Grinstead | Sussex | Skids + chains wrenched off a waggon |
| Mid June 1800 | Animal maiming | Laughton (Mark Cross) | Sussex | 3 horses poisoned by servant. NB: report doesn't state whether Mark Cross at Laughton or Rotherfield |
| 18.7.1800 | Arson | Chatham | Kent | |
| 28.7.1800 | Arson | Esher | Surrey | Overseer |
| 29.7.1800 | Threatening letter | Esher | Surrey | Overseer. Threatening to set fire to his house |
| 14.9.1800 | Threatening handbills | Canterbury | Kent | Calling on people to riot at market |
| 14.9.1800 | Assemblage | Rochester | Kent | 3-400 people gathered to decide what action to take |
| 15.9.1800 | Assemblage | Rochester | Kent | 200 people listen to radical speeches |
| 18.9.1800 | Assemblage | Rochester | Kent | 2000 people to make a radical petition to the mayor |
| 18.9.1800 | Incitement to riot | Kingston-Upon-Thames | Surrey | By individuals |
| 18-20.9.1800 | Threatening handbills & graffiti | Canterbury | Kent | Calling on people to riot at market |
| 19.9.1800 | Food Riot | Tunbridge Wells | Kent | |
| 19.9.1800 | Food Riot | Faversham | Kent | |
| 20.9.1800 | Food Riot | Woolwich | Kent | |

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|-------------------|---|-----------------------|-------------------------|--|
| 20.9.1800 | Food Riot | Canterbury | Kent | |
| 20.9.1800 | Food Riot | Dover | Kent | |
| 20.9.1800 | Food Riot | Deal | Kent | Taxation populaire |
| 20.9.1800 | Food Riot | Tonbridge | Kent | To lower the price of butter |
| 19+20.9.1800 | Threatening letters (3) | Sandwich | Kent | Inflammatory papers stuck up on toll bridge calling for riot |
| Late Sep 1800 | Food Riot | Sheerness | Kent | |
| 22.9.1800 | Food Riot | Margate | Kent | |
| 21-22.9.1800 | Demonstration | Godalming | Surrey | |
| 22.9.1800 | Demonstration | Midhurst | Sussex | |
| Mid Sep 1800 | Malicious damage | Canterbury | Kent | New wall erected to secure the woods and plantations |
| 25.9.1800 | Food Riot | Farnham | Surrey | |
| Late Sep 1800 | Food Riot | Easebourne | Sussex | |
| 2.10.1800 | Threatening handbills | Canterbury | Kent | |
| 2.10.1800 | Food Riot | Maidstone | Kent | |
| Mid Oct 1800 | Threatening graffiti | Lewes | Sussex | |
| 26.11.1800 | Animal maiming | Tunbridge Wells | Kent | Horses (2) |
| Late Nov 1800 | Threatening letters | Rye | Sussex | |
| Early Dec 1800 | Threatening letter | Lenham | Kent | Posted in market house |
| 15.12.1800 | Threatening letter | Sheerness | Kent | Commissioner of the dock-yard |
| 15.12.1800 | Arson | Rochester | Kent | |
| Mid-Late Dec 1800 | People's army in formation to lower the price of provisions | Ashford (area) | Kent | Parishes between Ashford + Wye |
| 26.12.1800 | Arson | Ninfield | Sussex | |
| Late Dec 1800 | Threatening letters (2) | Lenham | Kent | Threatening fire |
| Late Jan 1801 | Threatening 'papers' | 'different places' | Sussex | re Brown Bread |
| Early Feb 1801 | Food Riot | Pevensy | Sussex | re Brown Bread |
| Early Feb 1801 | Food Riot | St. John's Forest | Sussex | re Brown Bread |
| 6.2.1801 | Demonstration | Eastbourne | Sussex | Labs applied to JPs |
| 6.2.1801 | Demonstration | Lingfield | Surrey | re Brown Bread & Rice |
| 7.2.1801 | Demonstration | Horsham | Sussex | Labs applied to JPs |
| 7.2.1801 | Demonstration | Boreham | Sussex | Effigy of a miller burnt |
| 10.2.1801 | Demonstration | Hastings | Sussex | Labs applied to JPs |
| 14.2.1801 | Demonstration | Lewes | Sussex | Labs from Chiddingfold, Buxted, Framfield, + East Hoathly: varying motives |
| 15+16.2.1801 | Demonstration | Chiddingfold | Surrey | re rice, relief and cost of provisions |
| 19.2.1801 | Demonstration | Haslemere | Surrey | |
| 21.2.1801 | Demonstration | Horsham (vicinity of) | Sussex + Surrey borders | |
| 2.3.1801 | Strike | Chisle | Kent | Labourers |
| Early Mar 1801 | Animal maiming | Lewes | Sussex | Heifer shot |
| 9-16.3.1801 | Threat of riot | Horsham | Sussex | |
| 15.3.1801 | Threatening letter | Southover | Sussex | |
| 18.3.1801 | Threatening letter | Canterbury (nr.) | Kent | |

Appendix 2.3: The Resort to Covert Protest, 1790-1828

i.i) Arson, 1790 – 1828

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Parish</i> | <i>County</i> | <i>Details</i> |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|
| July 1790 | Heathfield | Sussex | Faggot stack |
| 5.7.1790 | Banstead | Surrey | Hay stacks (2) |
| November 1790 | Fordwich | Kent | House (2 beds) |
| 10.12.1790 | Pevensey | Sussex | Cattle lodge |
| 24.8.1791 | Deptford | Kent | House |
| 1.10.1791 | Thannington | Kent | Oast house |
| October 1791 | Lewisham | Kent | 2 wheat + 2 clover stacks |
| 20.4.1792 | Hastings | Sussex | House |
| 13.6.1792 | Ramsgate | Kent | House |
| 28.12.1792 | Dulwich | Surrey | Barn |
| June 1793 | Upper Beeding | Sussex | Woodland |
| 17.8.1793 | Seasalter | Kent | House |
| <i>Before Lent 1794</i> | <i>Location not stated</i> | <i>Surrey</i> | <i>House (insurance)</i> |
| 21.10.1794 | Dymchurch | Kent | Construction wood on seawall |
| 6.12.1794 | Heyshott | Sussex | Barn |
| 29.4.1795 | Carshalton | Surrey | Barn |
| 5.5.1795 | Teynham | Kent | Barn |
| 2.6.1795 | Worth | Sussex | Barn |
| 23.8.1795 | Woolwich | Kent | Malt house |
| 6.9.1795 | Lenham | Kent | Faggot stack |
| 20.9.1795 | Lenham | Kent | Faggot stack |
| 19.1.1796 | Hastings | Sussex | Wheat rick |
| 28.2.1796 | Woodmancote | Sussex (East) | Furze stack |
| 8.6.1796 | Allington | Kent | Out house |
| Late June 1796 | Seaford | Sussex | House |
| 5.11.1796 | Canterbury | Kent | Hop poles |
| Mid Dec 1796 | Lambeth | Surrey | House |
| 2.4.1797 | Smarden | Kent | Straw stack |
| 5.5.1798 | Brighton | Sussex | Prince's Pavilion |
| 1.11.1798 | East Blatchington | Sussex | Furze stack |
| 27.12.1798 | Ulcomb | Kent | Out house |
| 26.11.1799 | Lancing | Sussex | Barn + wheat rick |
| 7.12.1799 | East Greenwich | Kent | Barns |
| 15.2.1800 | Appledore | Kent | Poor houses |
| 5.4.1800 | Friston | Sussex | Wheat stack |

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|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------|----------------------|
| 12.4.1800 | Beeding | Sussex | Wheat stack |
| 4.5.1800 | Wartling | Sussex | 3 furze stacks |
| 18.7.1800 | Chatham | Kent | House |
| 28.7.1800 | Esher | Surrey | Overseer's shed |
| 15.12.1800 | Rochester | Kent | Wheat stack |
| 26.12.1800 | Ninfield | Sussex | Wheat rick |
| Sept 1801 | Farnham | Surrey | Hop warehouses |
| 4.10.1801 | Stanford | Kent | House |
| Nov 1801 | Frimley | Surrey | Wheat ricks |
| Dec 1801 | Chatham | Kent | House + shop |
| Jan 1802 | Heath field | Sussex | Farm-yard |
| 14.3.1802 | Eastchurch | Kent | Wheat barn |
| Aug 1802 | Merstham | Surrey | Barn |
| Sept 1802 | Merstham | Surrey | Wheat stack |
| 16.10.1802 | Leeds | Kent | Stack-yard |
| Jan 1803 | Canterbury | Kent | House |
| <i>Early 1803</i> | <i>Location unclear</i> | <i>Surrey</i> | <i>House</i> |
| Oct 1803 | Woolwich | Kent | House |
| Oct 1803 | Canterbury | Kent | Granary + machinery |
| Mar 1804 | Washington | Sussex | House |
| July 1805 | Woolwich | Kent | Premises |
| Sept 1805 | Canterbury | Kent | Faggot stack |
| Oct 1805 | Friston | Sussex | Hovel |
| Nov 1805 | Friston | Sussex | Hovel |
| Mar 1806 | East Dean | Sussex | Oat rick |
| Oct 1806 | Rotherhithe | Surrey | House |
| May 1807 | Margate | Kent | House + barn |
| May 1807 | Margate | Kent | House + barn |
| May 1807 | Margate | Kent | House + barn |
| Aug 1807 | Chatham | Kent | Stores |
| Oct 1807 | Cranley | Surrey | House of Industry |
| Nov 1807 | Sevenoaks (nr.) | Kent | Barns |
| Mar 1808 | Heathfield | Sussex | Woods |
| Mar 1808 | Heathfield | Sussex | Woods |
| Mar 1809 | Rainham | Kent | Wheat stack |
| July 1809 | Brighton (nr.) | Sussex | Furze |
| Oct 1809 | Cuddington | Surrey | Barley rick |
| Sept 1810 | Maresfield | Sussex | Stable |
| Oct 1810 | Murston | Kent | Wheat stack |
| Mid Jan 1811 | Maresfield | Sussex | Buildings and stacks |
| 25.01.1811 | Angmering | Sussex | House |
| 28.01.1811 | Angmering | Sussex | House |
| Early April 1811 | Dover | Kent | House |

| | | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|
| 08.04.1811 | Dover | Kent | House |
| 06.11.1811 | Petworth | Sussex | Barn |
| Mid Feb 1813 | Maresfield | Sussex | Faggot stack |
| 10.12.1812 | Dartford | Kent | Gaol |
| Mid May 1813 | Gillingham | Kent | Hay stack |
| Spring 1813 | Charing | Kent | ?? |
| Early Oct 1813 | Orpington | Kent | Hay ricks |
| Late Oct 1813 | Biddenden | Kent | Corn and hay stacks |
| 20.05.1815 | Tunbridge | Kent | Flour mill |
| Early Nov 1815 | Swanscombe | Kent | Faggot stack |
| Late Dec 1815 | Linton | Kent | Wheat stack |
| 08.01.1816 | Mereworth | Kent | House |
| Late Feb 1816 | Langley | Kent | Oat stack |
| 18.03.1816 | West Malling | Kent | Wheat stacks |
| 25.03.1816 | Maresfield | Sussex | Underwood |
| Mid Apr 1816 | Hollingbourne | Kent | Furze and faggot stacks |
| 28.04.1816 | Milton | Kent | Grocer's House |
| Spring 1816 | Godalming | Surrey | Outhouse and barn |
| Spring 1816 | Darenth | Kent | Cottage |
| Early Sept 1816 | Fant | Kent | Hay stack |
| Early Sep 1816 | East Farleigh | Kent | Out building |
| 29.10.1816 | Thorpe | Surrey | Barley stack |
| 17.12.1816 | Folkestone | Kent | Shipwrecked boat |
| Early July 1817 | Eastbourne | Sussex | Furze stack |
| Mid Sep 1817 | Ash | Kent | Lodge |
| Nov-Dec 1817 | Morden (6 cases) | Surrey | Various: house and rick-yards |
| 25.12.1817 | Frindsbury | Kent | Barn and stacks |
| Early Jan 1818 | Dartford | Kent | Iron foundry |
| 14.02.1818 | Hayes | Kent | Barn and oat stack |
| 02.04.1818 | Ightham | Kent | Stables and pub |
| Early June 1818 | Canterbury | Kent | Prison |
| Late Jul 1818 | Angmering | Sussex | Barn |
| Mid Oct 1818 | Kenningon | Kent | Hay stack |
| 05.11.1818 | Ashford | Kent | Hay stack |
| <i>Late 1818</i> | <i>No location given</i> | <i>Surrey</i> | <i>House</i> |
| Mid Aug 1819 | Henfield | Sussex | Faggot stack |
| 16.08.1819 | Bromley | Kent | Faggot stack (pub) |
| Late Sep 1819 | Ashford (nr.) | Kent | Agricultural property |
| Early Oct 1819 | Steyning | Sussex | Barley stack |
| 12.3.1820 | Chiddingly | Sussex | Stubble stack |
| 28.05.1820 | Sturry | Kent | Cowhouse |
| Mid Nov 1820 | Dover | Kent | House |

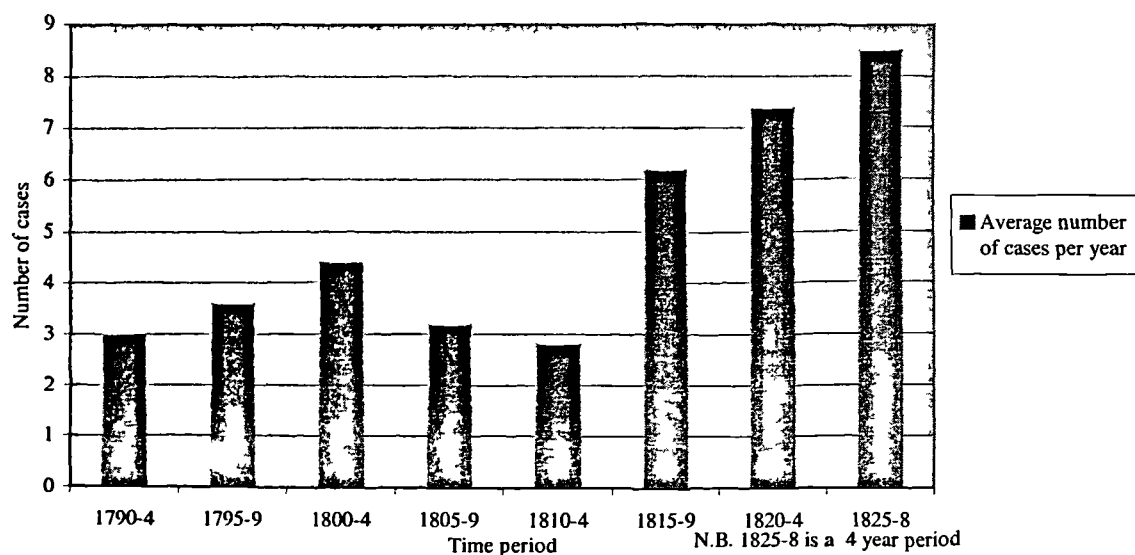
| | | | |
|-----------------|------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------|
| 08.11.1820 | Westwell | Kent | Stack |
| 05.11.1820 | Westwell | Kent | Stack |
| 30.10.1820 | Westwell | Kent | Stack |
| 31.12.1820 | Wilmington (Windore Hill) | Sussex | Windmill |
| 26.06.1821 | Peasmarsh | Sussex | Barn, stable and oast |
| 27.11.1821 | Pagham | Sussex | Wheat and vetch ricks |
| Mid Feb 1822 | Ringwould | Kent | Barn and lodges |
| Mid Feb 1822 | Elham | Kent | Malt house |
| March 1822 | Upper Hardres | Kent | Dairy and cow shed |
| Mid Mar 1822 | Gravesend | Kent | Straw stack |
| Mid Mar 1822 | Shorne | Kent | Stubble stack |
| Late Mar 1822 | Folkington | Sussex | Stack yard |
| 25.03.1822 | Jevington | Sussex | Oat stack |
| Late March 1822 | Chatham | Kent | ?? |
| 4.4.1822 | Stalisfield | Kent | Wheat stack |
| Late June 1822 | Ickham | Kent | Stack yard |
| 24.06.1822 | Limpsfield | Surrey | Barns and outbuildings |
| Mid Aug 1822 | Tonbridge | Kent | Wheat stack |
| Early Sep 1822 | Eastry | Kent | Seed windmill |
| 31.08.1822 | Westwell | Kent | Trefoil stack |
| Sep-Oct 1822 | Hawkhurst | Kent | Barn (loose straw set fire to) |
| 05.11.1822 | Northiam | Sussex | Hay stacks |
| 09.11.1822 | Burwash | Sussex | Barn and lodges |
| Mid Feb 1823 | Benenden | Kent | Barn |
| 12.02.1823 | Chichester | Sussex | Hay rick |
| 29.04.1823 | East Grinstead | Sussex | Barn and hay stack |
| 28.09.1823 | Newnham | Kent | Barn |
| 14.09.1823 | Southwark | Surrey | House |
| 06.11.1823 | Dover | Kent | Pub |
| 14.11.1823 | Warbleton | Sussex | Barn and lodge |
| Late Nov 1823 | Brighton | Sussex | Builder's shop |
| Early Jan 1824 | Coxheath | Kent | Windmill |
| 14.07.1824 | Bermondsey | Surrey | House |
| Early Jan 1825 | Charing | Kent | Hay stack |
| 31.12.1824 | Milton-next-Sittingbourne | Kent | Hedge |
| Late Feb 1825 | Harrietsham | Kent | Stack yard |
| Mid Mar 1825 | Sandwich | Kent | Hay stack |
| Early May 1825 | Brenchley | Kent | Barns |
| 13.07.1825 | Heyshott | Sussex | Hay ricks |
| Mid July 1825 | Folkestone | Kent | Barn and wheat ricks |
| 21.07.1825 | Bermondsey | Surrey | Manufactory |
| 21.07.1825 | Bermondsey | Surrey | Manufactory |

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--------|------------------------------------|
| 1.8.1825 | Gravesend | Kent | Barn |
| Early Sep 1825 | Deptford | Kent | Barn |
| Mid Sep 1825 | Guildford | Surrey | Rick yard |
| Late Sep 1825 | Ripley | Surrey | Hay stack |
| Aug/Sep 1825 | St. Lawrence, Thanet | Kent | Clover stack |
| Late 1825/Early 1826 | Egham | Surrey | House |
| 19.07.1826 | Westerham | Kent | Hay stack |
| Mid Aug 1826 | Sholden | Kent | Stack yard |
| Mid Sep 1826 | Womenswold (Denne Hill) | Kent | Mansion house |
| Early Oct 1826 | Sheerness | Kent | Pub |
| 27.10.1826 | Mereworth | Kent | Barn yard |
| 18.2.1827 | Chichester (near) | Sussex | Furze and underwood |
| Late Feb 1827 | Faversham | Kent | Outhouse (churchyard) |
| Mid Apr 1827 | Lenham (Green Street) | Kent | Cottages and stables |
| Late Apr 1827 | Langley | Kent | Farmhouse |
| Late Apr/ Early May 1827 | Hawkhurst | Kent | Underwood |
| Mid May 1827 | Rotherhithe ¹ | Surrey | Saw mills |
| Mid Aug 1827 | West Hougham | Kent | Hogshead |
| Early Nov 1827 | East Peckham | Kent | Stack yard and barn |
| Late Mar 1828 | Tunbridge Wells | Kent | Faggot stack |
| Early Oct 1828 | Bromley | Kent | Barn |
| Mid Oct 1828 | Bexhill | Sussex | Hay stack |
| Early Nov 1828 | Iford | Sussex | Stubble stack |
| Early Nov 1828 | Brighton | Sussex | Furze stacks |
| Early Dec 1828 | Brede | Sussex | Outbuildings, barns, and stacks |
| Early Dec 1828 | Hastings | Sussex | House |

¹ The fire is not reported as having occurred at Rotherhithe but rather on the Surrey side of the Thames. The only extensive mills matching that description were at Rotherhithe though.

i.ii) Arson, 1790-1828

Average number of cases of Arson by 5 year period, 1790-1828



ii.i) Animal Maiming, 1790-1810

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Parish</i> | <i>County</i> | <i>Details</i> |
|------------------|------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|
| July 1790 | Chislet | Kent | Cow |
| 8-15 August 1790 | Wickhambreaux | Kent | Horse |
| 23.8.1791 | Chipstead | Surrey | Ewe |
| 4.9.1791 | Chipstead | Surrey | Mare |
| 3.10.1791 | Lewes | Sussex | Dogs (6) |
| Late Nov 1791 | Newington-next-Sittingbourne | Kent | Tails cut from 10 horses |
| February 1792 | Pulborough | Sussex | Horse |
| Early May 1792 | Addington | Surrey | Manes of 7 + tails of 9 horses |
| May 1792 | Folkestone | Kent | Mare |
| September 1792 | Cuxton | Kent | Gelding |
| Early 1793 | <i>Location unclear</i> | <i>Sussex</i> | <i>Gelding</i> |
| Mid April 1793 | Murston | Kent | Horses poisoned |

| | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|--------|---|
| 11.8.1793 | Boxley | Kent | Two mares and a gelding |
| April 1794 | Canterbury (nr.) | Kent | Horses |
| 3.6.1796 | Friston | Sussex | Horse |
| July 1797 | Whitstable | Kent | Horses (7) |
| 2.9.1799 | Maidstone | Kent | Horse |
| 19.2.1800 | Mersham | Kent | Gelding |
| June 1800 | Laughton ¹ | Sussex | Horses (3) |
| 30.11.1800 | Tunbridge | Kent | Horses (2) |
| March 1801 | Lewes | Sussex | Heifer |
| 23.4.1801 | Doddington | Kent | Horses (2) |
| 14.6.1801 | Edburton | Sussex | Bullock |
| May 1802 | Kingsfold, nr. Horsham | Sussex | Horse (2) + Cow |
| 3.4.1803 | Little Chart | Kent | Ass |
| February 1804 | Stelling | Kent | Horse |
| 26.9.1807 | Steadham | Sussex | Mare |
| 2.11.1808 | Heathfield | Sussex | Pony |
| August 1809 | Canterbury | Kent | Pig |
| January 1810 | Thanington | Kent | Sows (2) |
| 25.3.1810 | Beckley | Sussex | Horses (5) |
| 16.10.1810 | Bingley | Kent | Horse |
| 23.10.1810 | Walmer | Kent | Horse |
| Mid July 1811 | Lewes | Sussex | Cygnets |
| 16.9.1811 | Bridge | Kent | Pigs (4) |
| Mid Oct 1811 | Ickham (Bramling) | Kent | Dogs (2) |
| Early Dec 1811 | Westerham | Kent | Horse in foal |
| 9.2.1812 | Chartham | Kent | Lamb |
| Mid Apr 1814 | Mayfield | Sussex | Horses |
| Early Mar 1817 | Horsted Keynes (Little Horsted) | Sussex | Pheasants (several) |
| 20.8.1817 | Epsom | Surrey | Cow |
| Mid Jan 1818 | Cuckfield | Sussex | Cart colt + hound |
| Mid 1818 - early 1819 | Cuxton | Kent | Horses (4) |
| Late June 1821 | Buxted | Sussex | Partridge eggs (2) |
| Early Nov 1821 | Queenborough | Kent | Heifers (4) |
| 21.10.1821 | Queenborough | Kent | Ram |
| 2.11.1821 | Queenborough | Kent | Heifers (2) |
| 7.11.1821 | Westfield | Sussex | Horses (3) let into threshing floor + died |
| 2.2.1822 | Benenden | Kent | Sheep (2) |
| Mid Mar 1822 | Brighton | Sussex | Cow |
| Mid May 1822 | Lewes | Sussex | Dog |
| Mid Sep 1823 | Woodmanstone | Surrey | Sheep (25) |

| | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|--------|---|
| Late Oct 1823 | West Peckham (Oxenhoath) | Kent | Horses (3) |
| Late Oct 1823 | Henfield | Sussex | Poisoned beans scattered on ground |
| Early Aug 1824 | Lewes | Sussex | Tail cut off cow |
| Mid Sep 1825 | Ewhurst | Sussex | Mare |
| Mid Nov 1825 | Crundale | Kent | Manes + tails of horses cut (4) |
| Mid June 1826 | Milton-next-Gravesend | Kent | Sheep (1) |
| Late Aug 1826 | Boughton Monchelsea | Kent | Horse |
| 26.11.1826 | Sundridge | Kent | 2 oxen, 2 mules, 3 pigs + poultry killed by arsenic |
| 2.2.1827 | Lewes | Sussex | 1 pig |
| Early May 1827 | Dover | Kent | 1 sheep |
| Mid Sep 1827 | Ashford (Bybrook) | Kent | Horse |
| Late Sep 1827 | Sheerness | Kent | 1 cow |
| Mid Dec 1827 | Stodmarsh | Kent | (Mr. Fox) 4 horses tails + manes cut off |
| Mid Dec 1827 | Stourmouth | Kent | (G. Culmer) Several cows |
| Early Feb 1828 | Throwley | Kent | Manes + tails cut from 4 horses. Clothes also stolen |
| 18.2.1828 | Biddenden | Kent | Manes + tails cut from 4 horses. Several articles also stolen |
| Early-Mid June 1828 | Staplehurst (+ area) | Kent | Many horses had manes + tails removed |
| Mid July 1828 | Ringmer | Sussex | Fish in pond poisoned |
| Early Aug 1828 | Tunbridge Wells | Kent | 2 Cows |
| Early Sept 1828 | Tunbridge Wells | Kent | Same victim. Cow |

¹ Location given to be Mark Cross, however in Sussex there are two such places, in the parishes of Rotherfield and Laughton.

ii.ii) Plant Maiming, 1790 – 1828

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Parish</i> | <i>County</i> | <i>Details</i> |
|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------|----------------------|
| 19.3.1790 | Margate | Kent | Trees |
| 19.9.1790 | Canterbury (Stuppington) | Kent | Young Poplar trees |
| 13.4.1792 | Brighton | Sussex | Trees and shrubs |
| May 1792 | Canterbury | Kent | Trees |
| 10.5.1792 | Horsham | Sussex | Vines |
| 15.3.1794 | Canterbury | Kent | Trees and plants |
| Dec-Jan 1795-96 | Davington | Kent | Various ¹ |

| | | | |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|--|
| March-April 1800 | Linstead (and adjoining parishes) | Kent | Trees, woods and shaws |
| 29.5.1800 | Framfield | Sussex | Hops (1,300 hills) |
| March 1801 | Chartham | Kent | Apple trees |
| Early Feb 1802 | Ewell | Surrey | 14 acres of cinquefoil + 16 acres of wheat trampled |
| October 1805 | Ringmer | Sussex | Young Oak trees |
| December 1807 | Canterbury (nr.) | Kent | Turnips |
| 22.5.1809 | East Preston | Sussex | Ash trees |
| May 1810 | Chartham | Kent | Hops |
| August 1810 | East Peckham | Kent | Fruit tree |
| 29.5.1812 | Coldred | Kent | Sheep let into standing wheat |
| Late August 1812 | <i>Exact location unclear</i> | <i>Sussex (West)</i> | <i>Thistle field levelled (14 acre)</i> |
| Early Sep 1812 | Barcombe | Sussex | Stocks of wheat (170) |
| Mid Apr 1813 | Stone-in-Oxney | Kent | Hop binds (1000) + poles (46) |
| Late May 1813 | Chislett | Kent | Fruit trees |
| 31.8.1813 | Canterbury | Kent | Trees |
| 2.9.1813 | Harbledown | Kent | Elm tree |
| Mid Aug 1814 | Preston-next-Wingham | Kent | Hop bines (40+) |
| Mid Feb 1815 | Canterbury | Kent | Trees + shrubs |
| Late Mar 1815 | Whitstable (Court Lees) | Kent | Trees |
| Mid May 1816 | Buxted | Sussex | Fir trees |
| Mid May 1816 | Maidstone | Kent | Hops |
| Early June 1816 | Boxley | Kent | Chestnut trees (3) |
| Mid June 1816 | Cranbrook | Kent | Young apple trees (4) |
| 1.6.1817 | Selindge | Kent | Hops |
| Early Mar 1818 | Westwell | Kent | Ash plants |
| Early Aug 1818 | Cranbrook | Kent | Hop bines (300) |
| Early Aug 1818 | Benenden | Kent | Hop hills (several hundred) |
| Mid Aug 1818 | Horsmonden | Kent | Hop hills (300+) |
| Early Sep 1818 | <i>Exact location unclear</i> | <i>Kent (East)</i> | <i>Poles of coppice (10)</i> |
| Early Sep 1818 | Chartham | Kent | Hop hills (several hundred) |
| Mid Nov 1818 | Bromley | Kent | Thousands of trees, flowers, plants. Fishpond drained. |
| 13.3.1819 | Frimley | Surrey | Fruit (18) + other (16) trees |
| 5.7.1819 | Benenden | Kent | Hop bines (25) |
| Late Aug 1819 | Benenden | Kent | Hop hills (156) |
| 16.12.1820 | Ashburnham | Sussex | Beech trees (16) |
| Early Aug 1821 | Burwash | Sussex | Hop bines |
| 1.6.1821 | Epsom | Surrey | Trees |

| | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|--------|--|
| 8.9.1821 | Putney | Surrey | Fruit trees |
| Late Dec 1821 | Ospringe | Kent | 200+ young apple trees |
| 12.12.1821 | Ospringe | Kent | 208 fruit trees |
| 1.4.1822 | East Malling | Kent | Apple (39) + pear (1) trees |
| 26.4.1822 | Eastbourne | Sussex | Trees |
| 13.7.1822 | Ulcomb | Kent | Hop hills (400) |
| 18.12.1822 | Dorking | Surrey | Box tree |
| 14.6.1823 | Plumsted | Kent | Hops |
| Mid July 1823 | Ospringe | Kent | Trampling crops |
| Early Sep 1823 | Aldingbourne | Sussex | Cows (5) + horses (2) let into standing oats |
| Late 1823 – Early 1824 | Goudhurst | Kent | Hops + theft of cherries |
| Mid Feb 1824 | Ospringe (Davington) | Kent | Wood |
| Mid April 1824 | New Romney | Kent | 16 Cucumber + melon plants |
| 6.6.1824 | Lewes | Sussex | Flowers, shrubs + trees |
| Mid June 1824 | Canterbury | Kent | Shrubs + young trees |
| 18.7.1824 | Mereworth | Kent | Hops |
| 18.7.1824 | Mereworth | Kent | Hops |
| 4.12.1825 | Alfriston | Sussex | Choice apple + pear trees (100+) |
| Late May 1826 | Maidstone | Kent | Hop sets (80-100+) |
| Early July 1826 | Littlebourne | Kent | Hop hills (300) |
| Late July 1826 | Loose | Kent | Hops |
| Mid Nov 1826 | Cranbrook | Kent | 20 hop bines |
| Early Feb 1827 | Mereworth | Kent | 69 apple + 16 pear trees |
| 17.7.1827 | Lewes | Sussex | Chestnut tree barked |
| Summer 1827 | Thurnham | Kent | Hop bines cut on 3 different occasions |
| Late Aug 1827 | East Molesey | Surrey | Garden fruit trees |
| 5.2.1828 | Frant | Sussex | Several trees. Also stole tools |
| Mid May 1828 | Tunbridge Wells | Kent | Flowers + shrubs |
| 24.5.1828 | Stockbury | Kent | 39 young fruit trees |
| Mid June 1828 | Tunbridge Wells | Kent | Vegetables destroyed |
| Mid June 1828 | Tunbridge Wells | Kent | Young trees destroyed |
| 22.6.1828 | East Preston | Sussex | Apple trees + gooseberry bushes |
| Early July 1828 | Langley | Kent | 500 hills of hops. Stock also let into wheat |
| Mid Nov 1828 | Ringmer | Sussex | Shrubs, fruit trees + flowers |
| Early Dec 1828 | Frindsbury | Kent | 23 young trees leading to Church |

¹ Hedges pulled down, green wood cut down, dead wood pulled down.

ii.iii) Malicious Damage, 1790 – 1828

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Parish</i> | <i>County</i> | <i>Details</i> |
|----------------------|--|---------------|---|
| mid January 1790 | Canterbury (Ashford) | Kent | Various objects placed on turnpike road |
| Early October 1790 | Canterbury | Kent | Green bricks |
| May 1791 | Harbledown | Kent | Hop poles |
| July 1791 | Brighton | Sussex | Fence |
| 3.10.1791 | Mereworth | Sussex | Gowns and Cloaks |
| Early March 1795 | Lewes | Sussex | Posts + stones placed in the middle of the road |
| December 1795 | Falmer | Sussex | Wattle placed on road |
| Dec-Jan 1795-96 | Davington | Kent | Various ¹ |
| February 1797 | Henfield | Sussex | Tomb stones, stiles and fences |
| February 1797 | Leeds, Langley, Boughton Monchelsea, Town Sutton, Chart Sutton + Barming | Kent | Vestries ransacked |
| March 1797 | Boughton-under-Blean | Kent | Windows smashed, gates cut down, dyke destroyed |
| 30.1.1798 | Shadoxhurst | Kent | Bee hives |
| 17.11.1798 | Lewes | Sussex | Windows and sash |
| May 1799 | Eastwell | Kent | Fences and frames |
| 15.9.1799 | Rochester | Kent | Gate and ornamental buildings |
| <i>Late Oct 1799</i> | <i>Location unclear</i> | <i>Kent</i> | <i>Rev's chaise much damaged</i> |
| March/April 1800 | Linstead (and adjoining parishes) | Kent | Various ³ |
| 2.6.1800 | West Grinstead | Sussex | Waggon |
| Mid Sep 1800 | Canterbury | Kent | Fence |
| 9.2.1802 | Higham | Kent | Stile |
| 1.3.1804 | Lewes | Sussex | Window and sash |
| 28.8.1805 | Brighton | Sussex | Window of Prince's Theatre |
| February 1807 | Waltham | Kent | Cutter box and harnesses, and horses let into yard |
| May 1807 | Brighton | Sussex | Stable of Prince of Wales |
| 19.5.1809 | Portslade | Sussex | Horse let loose |
| 3.5.1810 | Brighton | Sussex | Gates of two properties |
| 18.6.1810 | Slaugham | Sussex | Fence and trespass notice |
| 22.7.1811 | Frant | Sussex | Breaking windows (+ threat to cut throat of victim) |
| Mid Oct 1811 | Hurstpierpoint | Sussex | Inn sign |
| Late Feb 1812 | Chartham | Kent | Church windows |
| 7.7.1812 | Sandwich | Kent | Window |
| Early Jan 1814 | Margate | Kent | Sash windows (8) |

| | | | |
|-----------------|----------------------------|--------|---|
| Mid May 1815 | Preston-Grove Ferry | Kent | Blue Bridge over Little Stour |
| Late Sep 1815 | Lewes (Cliffe) | Sussex | Windows |
| Mid Dec 1815 | Maidstone (Penenden Heath) | Kent | Gates + fences on footpath |
| Late April 1816 | Milton (Sittingbourne) | Kent | Door + windows |
| 30.12.1816 | Ditchling | Sussex | Windows (5) + waggon |
| 15.7.1817 | Kingston-Upon-Thames | Surrey | Destruction of enclosures |
| Late Sep 1819 | Margate | Kent | Engineer Steam yacht cut from moorings |
| Mid Sep 1820 | Canterbury | Kent | Footbridge sawed nr. Abbots Mill over Stour |
| 16.11.1820 | Canterbury | Kent | Windows |
| Early Dec 1820 | Thannington (Wincheap) | Kent | Railings |
| 15.2.1821 | Croydon | Surrey | Bridge coping stone |
| Late Feb 1821 | Canterbury | Kent | Wooden railings |
| Late Feb 1821 | Brighton | Sussex | B Gazette office pilisters |
| Early Mar 1821 | Canterbury | Kent | Stone monument |
| Late July 1821 | Canterbury | Kent | Fence + sun dial |
| Late July 1821 | Canterbury | Kent | Cathedral gate, windows opposite + hit victim on head |
| 11.12.1821 | Egham | Surrey | Enclosure fences |
| 30.12.1821 | Chichester | Sussex | Dam |
| Late Feb 1822 | Lewes (Southover) | Sussex | Broken windows |
| Late Feb 1822 | Lewes (Southover) | Sussex | Broken windows |
| 17.2.1824 | Queenborough | Kent | Gate + pallistrade |
| Early Mar 1824 | Chilham | Kent | Plough + windows |
| Early Dec 1824 | Canterbury | Kent | Seat hacked |
| Early Dec 1824 | Canterbury | Kent | 'Composition' destroyed |
| Mid May 1825 | Chichester | Sussex | Door way |
| Mid Sep 1825 | Marden | Kent | Panes of glass (70) |
| Mid Nov 1825 | Crundale | Kent | Housings of harness cut and wagon whips destroyed |
| 9.1.1826 | Caple-le-Ferne | Kent | Side door of dwelling house |
| Late Jan 1826 | Alfriston | Sussex | Parlour window smashed |
| Mid Mar 1826 | Maidstone | Kent | Iron gates + walls |
| Mid Sep 1826 | Maidstone | Kent | Door knockers + bell handles |
| Early Nov 1826 | Hastings | Kent | Ropes cut from boats + other damage |
| Late July 1827 | Seasalter | Kent | 2 oak swing gates destroyed |
| Mid Sep 1827 | Lower Hardres | Kent | Cottage pulled down |
| Late Oct 1827 | Tunbridge Wells | Kent | Leather on a fly |
| Mid Dec 1827 | Stourmouth | Kent | (G. Culmer) Brass taps removed from water butts |

| | | | |
|----------------|----------------------|--------|--|
| Late Feb 1828 | Tunbridge Wells | Kent | Iron fence + wall |
| Mid April 1828 | Battle | Sussex | 6 houses of respectable inhabitants were vandalised. Fronts were daubed with red paints, gates were removed, some broken |
| 24.5.1828 | Stockbury | Kent | Plough destroyed |
| Mid June 1828 | Tunbridge Wells | Kent | Bricks thrown at doors |
| Mid June 1828 | Tunbridge Wells | Kent | Windows broken |
| 23.7.1828 | Uckfield | Sussex | New wall pulled down |
| Early Nov 1828 | Alfriston | Sussex | Windows broken |
| Mid Nov 1828 | Chatham | Kent | Glass in Church broken for 2 nd time in 1828 |
| Mid Nov 1828 | Ospringe (Davington) | Kent | Steel pieces placed into sieves at gunpowder works |
| 6.12.1828 | Rochester | Kent | Windows of pub broken for 3 rd time |

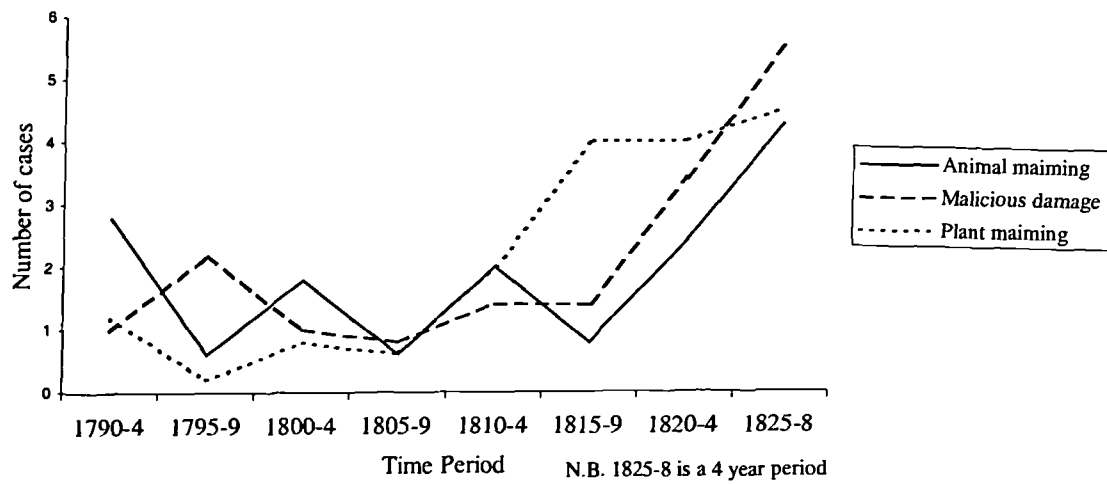
¹ Fences broken down, stock turned into fields.

² Leeds, Langley, Boughton Monchelsea, Town Sutton, Chart Sutton and Barming.

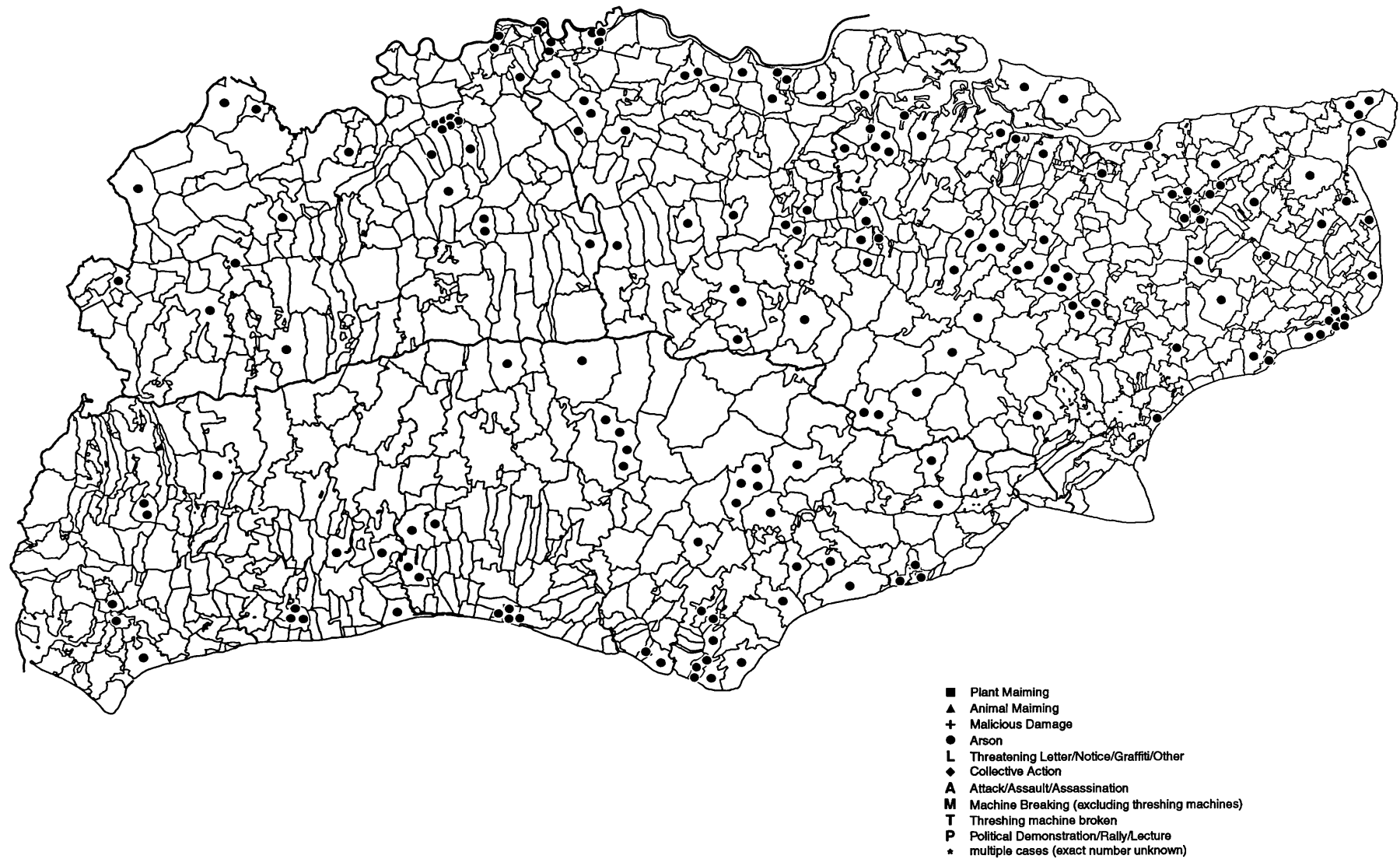
³ Iron work taken from gates, ploughs, harrows and other farming utensils. Hedges, fences, gates, posts and rails broken down.

ii.iv) Non-Arson Covert Protests, 1790-1828

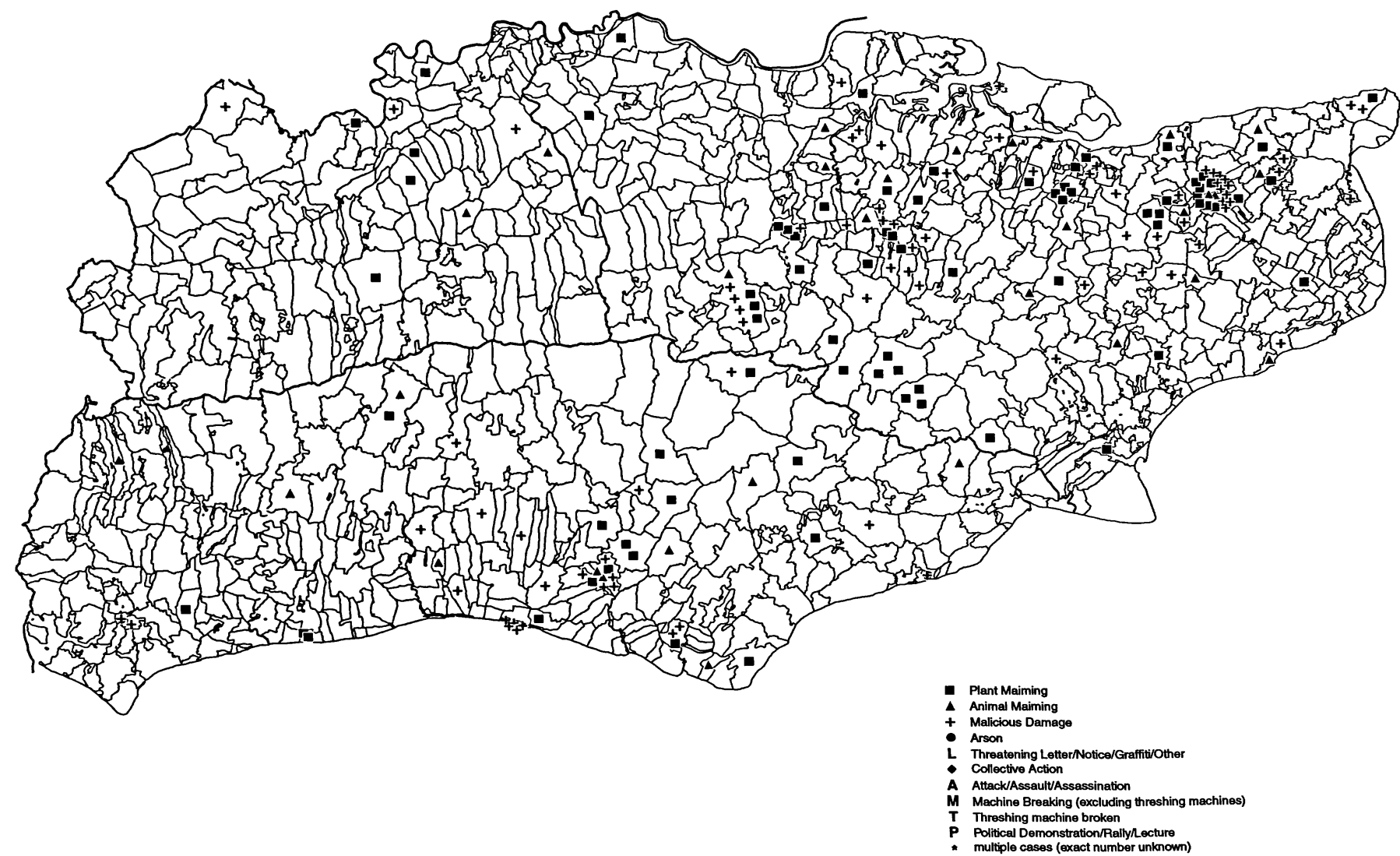
*Average number of cases of non-arson Covert Protests by 5 year period,
1790-1828*



Map 2.3: Incidence of Arson, 1790-1828



Map 2.4: Incidence of non-Arson Covert Protests, 1790-1828



Appendix 3.1: All events, 1831-1833

1831

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Parish</i> | <i>County</i> | <i>Incident</i> | <i>Details</i> |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|--|--|
| Late Dec 1830 – early Jan | Sevenoaks (nr.) | Kent | Attack | Farmer |
| Late Dec 1830 – early Jan | Lewisham | Kent | Arson | Church |
| 1 January | Herne | Kent | Complaint by paupers to Canterbury Bench | Re parish wages |
| 1-2 January | Albury | Surrey | Threatening letter | Drummond. Attached to park paling |
| 1-2 January | Albury | Surrey | Threatening letter | Smallpiece |
| 2 January | Eastbourne | Sussex | Arson | Farm yard |
| 5 January | West Lavington | Sussex | Arson | Pub buildings |
| 6 January | Guildford | Surrey | Attempted assassination | Master of Workhouse |
| 10 January | Greenwich | Kent | Threatening letter | Threatening overseer's machines |
| 10 January | Greenwich | Kent | Arson | Theatre. Supposed to target overseer |
| 14 January | Dover | Kent | Arson | Farm-yard |
| Mid January | Whitstable (Borstal Hill) | Kent | Threatening letters (3) | Against use of a threshing machine |
| 17 January | Whitstable (Borstal Hill) | Kent | Arson | Farm-yard including dismantled threshing machine |
| 20 January | Donnington | Sussex | Threatening letter | Signed 'Swing'. Regarding threshing machine use |
| Mid - late January | East Grinstead | Sussex | Threatening letter | Overseer threatened with assassination |
| Mid - late January | East Grinstead | Sussex | Threatening letter | Magistrate threatened with assassination |
| 26 January | Dover | Kent | Arson | Black Horse pub |
| 29 January | Northbourne (Ashley) | Kent | Arson | Parsonage barn |
| 31 January | Otterden | Kent | Arson | Two oat stacks |
| 3 February | Hadlow | Kent | Threatening letter | Assistant overseer |
| 4 February | Hadlow | Kent | Threatening letter | Magistrate |
| 5 February | Egham | Surrey | Arson | Barn + outbuildings |
| 10 February | Eastbourne | Sussex | Arson | Farm-yard |
| 19 February | Mayfield | Sussex | Arson | Stack of tithe hay |
| 20 February | Horley | Surrey | Arson | Stack |
| 21 February | Chelsfield (Farningham) | Kent | Arson | Barley stack |
| 24 February | Hadlow | Kent | Arson | Barn |
| 24 February | Hailsham | Sussex | Arson | Lodges + granary |
| 27 February | Eastbourne | Sussex | Incendiarists ball found | |
| Late February | Bilsington | Kent | Petition | Against threshing machines |
| 1 March | Tunbridge Wells | Kent | Arson | Common |

| | | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|--------|-------------------------------|--|
| Early March | Margate | Kent | Threatening letters (several) | Brothers who own Tivoli Gardens. Margate postmark |
| 17 March | Dover | Kent | Arson | Gaol. An attempt to escape |
| 25 March | Bexhill | Sussex | Arson | Oat stack |
| 27 March | Morden | Surrey | Threatening letter | Threatening arson re wages |
| Mid-late March | Battle (area) | Sussex | Combination | Labourers. To raise wages |
| Early April | Horsham | Sussex | Planned riot | Handbills so stuck-up |
| 7 April | Alfriston (Milton) | Sussex | Arson | Farm-yard |
| 20 April | Keymer | Sussex | Arson | Corn stack |
| 20 April | Keymer | Sussex | Arson | Two hay-stacks. Same victim but a different farm |
| 21 April | Ockley | Surrey | Arson | Wheat and hay stack |
| 21 April | Ockley | Surrey | Arson | Part of a hay stack |
| 24 April | Hurstpierpoint | Sussex | Arson | Barn |
| Late April - early May | Rye | Sussex | Riot | |
| 7 May | Frindsbury | Kent | Plant maiming | Bed of tulips |
| 8 May | Beckley (Four Oaks) | Sussex | Arson | Farm-yard |
| 11 May | Hadlow | Kent | Arson | Wheat and bean stacks |
| Mid May | Boughton-under-Blean | Kent | Arson | 30-40 acres of wood |
| 16 May | Brede | Sussex | Arson | Barn |
| 17 May | Chichester (without Westgate) | Sussex | Arson | Outhouse |
| 18 May | Boughton-under-Blean | Kent | Arson | More wood |
| 19-22 May | Brede | Sussex | Arson | 4-5 acres of underwood |
| 23 May | Bexhill | Sussex | Arson | Parish barn |
| Late May | Dover | Kent | 'Swing' graffiti | Walls + buildings |
| Late May -early June | Ewhurst | Sussex | Arson | 40 acres of underwood |
| 2 June | Hertsmonceaux (Nuttingham) | Sussex | Arson | Barn + lodges |
| 5 June | Southwark | Surrey | Arson | House |
| 6 June | Rainham (Berengrave) | Kent | Arson | Farm-yard |
| 7 June | Tonbridge | Kent | Arson | Waggon |
| 9 June | Canterbury (St. Thomas' Hill) | Kent | Arson | Mansion |
| 11 June | Selling (Chilham border) | Kent | Arson | Farm-yard |
| Mid June | Swale parishes | Kent | Threats of arson | Farmers re lowness of wages |
| 18 June | East Malling | Kent | Arson | Hay stack |
| Late June - early July | Aldington | Kent | Nightly meetings of labourers | |
| June or July | Halstead | Kent | Arson | Two cottages |
| Late July | Oving + Aldingbourne | Sussex | Combination/Assemblage | Labourers re price of harvest labour |
| 24 July | Sidlesham | Sussex | Combination/Assemblage | Labourers re price of harvest labour. Used pressing. |
| 25 July | West Wittering | Sussex | Assemblage/ | Seeking harvest work |

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|----------------|--------------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------|--|
| | | | Attack on strangers | |
| 30 July | Petworth | Sussex | Arson | Barn + hovel |
| 30 July | Barham | Kent | Threshing machine | Mr. Harvey |
| 31 July | Boughton-under-Blean | Kent | Arson | Bean stack |
| 2 August | Newington-next-Sittingbourne | Kent | Assemblage | Attempt by labourers to increase wages |
| 2 August | Medway – Isle of Grain | Kent | Assemblage | Attempt to increase wages |
| 4 August | Ripple | Kent | Threshing machine | |
| 4 August | Ripple (vicinity) | Kent | Malicious damage | Mown wheat scattered over field, road and in pond. |
| 4 August | Sittingbourne (nr.) | Kent | Assemblage | To effect an increase in wages |
| 6 August | Maxton (nr. Dover) | Kent | Scythes destroyed | Large party of bricklayers + labourers to prevent corn from being mown |
| Mon (9 Aug) | Bridge (nr.) | Kent | Strike + scythes destroyed | On account of Irish labourers being employed to mow wheat |
| Early August | Petworth | Kent | Arson | Wheat rick |
| 14 August | Hougham | Kent | Attack on Irish labourers | Very violent. Had sickles destroyed. |
| 15 August | Romney Marsh (Burmarsh + Bonnington) | Kent | Threshing machines (2) | |
| 21 August | Guestling | Sussex | Arson | Farm-yard |
| 27 August | Herstmonceaux | Sussex | Arson | Barn-yard |
| 27 August | East Dean | Sussex | Arson | Furze field |
| 27 August | Wingham (area) | Kent | Assemblage | To resist mowing wheat + threshing machines |
| 28 August | Eastbourne | Sussex | Threatening letter | Re harvest wages |
| 29 August | Brighton | Sussex | Union founded | 98 members present |
| 31 August | Barham | Kent | Arson | Mr. Harvey. Wheat stack |
| 16 September | Washington | Sussex | Arson | Barn + hovel |
| 18 September | Singledge | Kent | Arson | Barn |
| 18 September | Singledge (nr.) | Kent | Animal maiming | Sheep |
| 23 September | <i>Exact location unclear</i> | <i>Surrey</i> | <i>Animal maiming</i> | <i>Cattle</i> |
| 24 September | Walmer | Kent | Arson | Hay stack |
| Late September | Rye | Sussex | Plan to destroy sluice | Military protection sought on 24 September |
| 26 September | Limpsfield | Surrey | Arson | Corn barn + hop kiln |
| 1 October | Rolvenden | Kent | Malicious damage | 5 hop pockets rolled into pond |
| 1 October | Wadhurst | Sussex | Threats of arson | Re collecting Great Tithes in kind |
| 3 October | Chailey | Sussex | Plant maiming | Rev. Trebeck. Trees |
| 5 October | Tangmere | Sussex | Threatening letter | Arson |
| 6 October | Challock | Kent | Arson | Overseer. Barn-yard |
| 6 October | Frindsbury | Kent | Murder | Farmer shot. Died a month later |
| 9 October | Btwn Faversham + Charing | Kent | Arson | Barn |
| 17 October | Whatlington | Sussex | Arson | Oat stack |
| 18 October | Horton Kirby | Kent | Arson | Barn + lodge |
| 21 October | Ashford | Kent | Seditious handbill | |

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|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------|--------------------------------|--|
| 22 October | Teston (prob Keston) | Kent | Arson | |
| 25 October | Long Ditton (Hook) | Surrey | Arson | Farm-yard |
| Late October | Tunbridge Wells | Kent | Arson (2) | Furze twice set on fire |
| 30 October | Alfriston | Sussex | Arson | (Mr. Bodle) Tithe barn |
| 31 October | Throwley | Kent | Arson | Overseer. Town Place Farm |
| 31 October | Throwley | Kent | Arson | Overseer. Court Lodge Farm |
| 31 October – 2 November | Margate | Kent | Threatening letters + placards | Sent to parish officers/ posted around town |
| 1/2 November | Wadhurst | Sussex | Arson | No details |
| Late October – early November | Rolvenden | Kent | Arson | No details |
| 6 November | West Hoathly | Sussex | Arson | Wheat + oat stacks |
| 7 November | Send (Burnt Common) | Surrey | Arson | Oat rick |
| 7 November | Billingshurst | Sussex | Assemblage | 100 labourers at vestry meeting |
| 8 November | Hurstpierpoint | Sussex | Arson | Had threatened to set fire to wheat rick. House + farm |
| 9 November | Rye | Sussex | Assemblage | Planned 'annual' meeting of labourers. Military used |
| Early November | Eastbourne | Sussex | Threatening letter | General address |
| 13 November | Dover | Kent | Arson | Hay stack + lodge |
| 15 November | Eastry | Kent | Arson | Farm-yard |
| 19 November | Cheam (Lower) | Surrey | Arson | Straw + bean haulm stack |
| 22 November | Shere | Surrey | Arson | Barley rick |
| 22 November | Albury (Brook) | Surrey | Arson | Oat rick |
| 23 November | Bagshot | Surrey | Arson | Overseer. Wheat rick. |
| 24 November | Morden (Great) | Surrey | Arson | Barley + wheat ricks |
| 27 November | Hartlip | Kent | Arson | Stack-yard |
| Late November | Petworth | Sussex | Arson | Farm-yard |
| 1 December | Binsted | Sussex | Arson | Barn |
| 9 December | Footscray (Sidcup) | Kent | Arson | Barn |
| 11 December | Arlington (Milton Place) | Sussex | Arson | (Charles Ade – Thorncroft case) Barn + outhouses |
| 11 December | Alfriston | Sussex | Arson | Stack |
| 11 December | Wateringbury | Kent | Animal maiming | Two heifers shot |
| Mid December | Wormshill | Kent | Animal maiming | Gelding |
| 22 December | Ulcomb | Kent | Arson | Barn |
| 26 December | Funtingdon | Sussex | Arson | No details |
| 26 December | Bosham | Sussex | Arson | Two hay stacks |
| 30 December | Throwley | Kent | Arson | (Shortwood Farm) Farm-yard |
| Late December | Ulcomb | Kent | Arson | Wheat barn + wheat stacks |

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Parish</i> | <i>County</i> | <i>Incident</i> | <i>Details</i> |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Mid January | Southfleet | Kent | Animal maiming | Mare |
| Late January | Greenwich | Kent | Assault | On overseer |
| Early February | Chichester (Crocker Hill) | Sussex | Plant maiming + malicious damage | Vegetables + trees and hot-bed frame |
| 3 February | Durrington (Salvington) | Sussex | Arson | Two cottages + farm-yard |
| Late February | Fordwich | Kent | Arson | Barn |
| Late February | Lewisham (Soutend) | Kent | Arson | Farm-yard |
| 3 March | Pulborough | Sussex | Assemblage | Parish labourers re wages |
| Early March | New Romney | Kent | Animal maiming | Horse |
| February – early March | East Peckham | Kent | Animal maiming | 5 horses + 1 cow |
| Early March | Yalding | Kent | Animal maiming | 2 sows |
| Early March | Chichester (West Park) | Sussex | Animal maiming | Ewe |
| Early March | Brighton (Kemp Town) | Sussex | Strike + assault | Parish labourers attacked surveyor + later struck |
| Mid March | Aylesford | Kent | Animal maiming | Calf |
| Mid March | Farnham (?) | Surrey | Arson | Furze stack |
| 27 March | Farnham | Surrey | Threatening letter | JP. Alludes to earlier fire |
| Late March/Early April | Throwley | Kent | Arson | Richard Cobb |
| Early – mid April | Ryarsh | Kent | Arson | Cottage |
| Late April | Ringmer | Sussex | Complaints to Lewes Bench | 20 Ringmer paupers re lack of employment |
| Late May | Tunbridge Wells | Kent | Arson | Furze on common |
| Early June | Uckfield (Ridgewood) | Sussex | Arson | Barn |
| Mid June | Lewes | Sussex | Plant maiming | Garden plants |
| Late June | Margate (Dane) | Kent | Malicious damage | Wall pulled down |
| Early-mid July | Pyrford | Surrey | Malicious damage | Dams, mounds and works on River |
| Late July | Bredhurst | Kent | Arson | Farm-yard |
| Sat (26 July) | Hythe | Kent | Arson | Hay stack |
| Sat last (28 Jul) | Brighton (Black Rock) | Sussex | Arson | Furze stack + waggon |
| July-August | Westwell | Kent | Arson (2) | |
| Early August | Milton-next- Thannington | Kent | Threatening letter | 'Swing' |
| 22 August | Sandhurst | Kent | Plant maiming | 80 hills of hops |
| Early September | Westwell | Kent | Arson | Godfrey's Barn |
| Early September | Challock | Kent | Arson | Black Fosted Barn |
| Early September | Croydon | Surrey | Threshing machine | 15 men |
| Late September | Pulborough | Sussex | Arson | Rick of barley |
| 21 September | Horsham | Sussex | Assemblage | To prevent distraintment of property re church rates |
| Early October | Hoo | Kent | Arson | Farm-yard |
| Early October | Chartham | Kent | Arson | Stack-yard |
| 10 October | Rainham | Kent | Assemblage + | Parish labourers re wages. |

| | | | | |
|----------------|------------------------------------|--------|------------------|---|
| | | | assault | Overseer |
| Early November | Kingston (nr Shoreham) | Sussex | Arson | Rick-yard |
| 3 November | Woking | Surrey | Arson | Hay + wheat stacks |
| 3 November | Pyrford | Surrey | Arson | Farm-yard |
| 3 November | Sundridge | Kent | Arson | Stack-yard |
| 6 November | Crowhurst (Wintersell) | Surrey | Arson | Farm-yard |
| 8 November | Uckfield | Sussex | Arson | Straw stack |
| 14 November | Sundridge | Kent | Assemblage/ Riot | Re apprehension of supposed incendiaries |
| 20 November | Sundridge | Kent | Arson | Assistant overseer |
| 23 November | Tonbridge (nr.) | Kent | Arson | |
| Mid November | Petworth (Riverhill) | Sussex | Arson | Rick-yard |
| 24 November | Westerham (nr.) | Kent | Arson | Kent parish nr. Limpsfield |
| 26 November | Edenbridge | Kent | Arson | |
| 23 November | Lingfield | Surrey | Arson | Barn |
| 25 November | Sussex parishes close to Lingfield | Sussex | Arson (2) | |
| 24 November | Otford | Kent | Arson | 2 barley stacks |
| 25 November | Ardingley | Sussex | Arson | Night before Horsted Keynes Political Union meeting. Barn |
| 25 November | Washington (Chanctonbury) | Sussex | Arson | Barley stack |
| Late November | Crowhurst (Wintersell) | Surrey | Arson | Barn |
| Late November | Chobham (nr) | Surrey | Arson | |
| Early December | West Tarring | Sussex | Arson | Farm-yard |
| Early December | Eastergate | Sussex | Arson | Farm-yard |
| 9 December | Hastingleigh | Kent | Arson | Arthur Billes |
| 9 December | Crundale | Kent | Arson | |
| 9 December | Wye (Pett Street) | Kent | Arson | |
| 9 December | Hastingleigh | Kent | Arson | John Marshall |
| Mid December | Pulborough | Sussex | Arson | Oat rick |
| Late December | Shoreham | Kent | Arson (3) | |

1833

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Parish</i> | <i>County</i> | <i>Incident</i> | <i>Details</i> |
|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Early January | Strood | Kent | Arson | Outbuildings |
| Mid January | Chailey | Sussex | Attempted assassination | Shots fired through bedroom window |
| Mid – late January | Westwell | Kent | 'depredations' | And felonies |
| 3 February | Chiddingstone | Kent | Arson | Oat stack |
| 14 February | Hoath | Kent | Arson | Farm-yard of parsonage |
| 22 February | Ramsgate (Nether Court) | Kent | Arson | |
| 22 February | Frindsbury | Kent | Malicious damage | Overseer. Windows |
| 20 March | Dover | Kent | Animal maiming | Dog |

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|-----------------------|------------------------------|--------|----------------------------|---|
| Late March | Tunbridge Wells | Kent | Threatening letter | Master of Chafford Paper Mills. Property would be destroyed unless bailiff was discharged |
| Late March | Canterbury | Kent | Riot | Guildhall pelted with stones during JP + Mayor meeting |
| Mid April | Lewes | Sussex | Plant maiming | Shrubs + flowers |
| 18 May | Goudhurst | Kent | Animal maiming | Sheep |
| Late May | Faversham | Kent | Malicious damage | Windows |
| Late May | Goudhurst | Kent | Animal maiming | Pig |
| Late May | Aldingbourne | Sussex | Arson | Farm-yard |
| Late June | Gravesend | Kent | Riot + destruction of pier | By Watermen |
| 21 June | Marden | Kent | Plant maiming | 280 poles of hops cut |
| 21 June | Marden | Kent | Plant maiming | 153 poles of hops cut |
| Late June – late July | Stockbury | Kent | Plant maiming | 200+ hop vines cut |
| Early July | Rochester | Kent | Arson | House |
| 2 July | Kingsnorth | Kent | Plant maiming | 42 poles of hops cut |
| Late July | Clayton (Stonepound) | Sussex | Attack on Irish labourers | Many severely injured |
| Early August | Lancing | Sussex | Arson | Farm-yard |
| Early August | Margate | Kent | Strike | Journeymen shoemakers re wages |
| Early August | Chartham | Kent | Arson | Stack-yard |
| 10 August | Barcombe | Sussex | Threatening letter | Re collecting tithes- in kind |
| Mid August | Bishopsbourne | Kent | Arson | Stack-yard. Had received threats for mowing his wheat |
| Mid August | Hougham | Kent | Threshing machine | On hire. Party who had spilled out of a beer-shop |
| 21 August | East Langdon (Langdon Court) | Kent | Arson | Re mowing of wheat |
| 3 September | Lancing | Sussex | Arson | |
| Late September | East Hoathly | Sussex | Arson | Hay-stack |
| Late September | Eastbourne | Sussex | Arson | Barn |
| Early October | Offham | Sussex | Arson | Barn |
| Mid October | Offham | Sussex | Arson | Barn. |
| Mid October | Westham | Sussex | Arson | Hay-stack and load of straw |
| 27 October | Barham | Kent | Arson | Stubble stack |
| Early November | Nr. Battle | Sussex | Arson | Wheat rick |
| 2 November | Ewhurst | Sussex | Arson | Farm-yard |
| Mid November | New Romney | Kent | Animal maiming | Bees |
| 7 December | St. Margaret at Cliffe | Kent | Arson | Stack |
| Mid December | Ruckinge | Kent | Arson | Frustrated by a boy |
| Mid December | Ash | Surrey | Arson | |
| Mid December | Egham | Surrey | Arson | Rick-yard |

Appendix 3.2: All events, 1834 to mid 1836

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Parish</i> | <i>County</i> | <i>Incident</i> | <i>Details</i> |
|----------------|-----------------|---------------|---|---|
| Early Jan 1834 | Dover | Kent | Malicious damage | Many windows broken |
| Early 1834 | Wittersham | Kent | Riotous assembly & threatening overseer | John Mann & 4 others charged |
| Early Jan 1834 | Eastry | Kent | Arson | Farmyard |
| Early Jan 1834 | Selsey | Sussex | Arson | Rick of barley |
| Mid Jan 1834 | Abinger | Surrey | Arson | Barley stack |
| Late Jan 1834 | Hoath | Kent | Arson | Barn and stack destroyed |
| Early Feb 1834 | Stourmouth | Kent | Threatening letter | Destruction of property |
| 16.02.1834 | Footscray | Kent | Arson | Stables destroyed |
| 10.02.1834 | Nr. Canterbury | Kent | Strike | Outdoor paupers from workhouse farm |
| 17.02.1834 | Wingham | Kent | Arson | Farmyard |
| Mid Feb 1834 | Ramsgate | Kent | Malicious damage, plant maiming | Fence, young apple trees |
| Early Mar 1834 | Eythorne | Kent | Arson (attempted) | Straw |
| 08/09.03.1834 | Icklesham | Sussex | Arson | Barn, lodge, 2 hay stacks |
| Mid Mar 1834 | Northiam | Sussex | Arson | Large pile of hop bines |
| Early Apr 1834 | Banstead | Surrey | Arson | 2 ricks destroyed |
| Mid Apr 1834 | Dymchurch | Kent | Animal maiming | Dog severely wounded |
| Mid Apr 1834 | Brighton | Sussex | Union formed | By shoemakers |
| Mid Apr 1834 | Bicknor | Kent | Arson | Barn & several haystacks destroyed |
| Late Apr 1834 | Old Romney | Kent | Malicious damage | Gig |
| Late Apr 1834 | New Romney | Kent | Plant maiming | Young trees uprooted |
| Late Apr 1834 | Salvington | Sussex | Arson | Granary store |
| Late Apr 1834 | Lewes | Sussex | Strike | Tailors |
| Early May 1834 | Alfriston | Sussex | Arson | Barn & 3 wheat stacks |
| Late Jun 1834 | Otham | Kent | Plant maiming | Hop bines: upwards of 30-40 poles |
| Early Jul 1834 | Petham | Kent | Plant maiming | Hop bines: 96 hills |
| Early Oct 1834 | Maidstone? | Kent | Arson | Stable |
| Mid Oct 1834 | Hunston | Sussex | Animal maiming | 2 cows tails tied |
| 7.10.1834 | Nr. Tunbridge | Kent | Arson | Lodge destroyed |
| Mid Oct 1834 | Nr. Tunbridge | Kent | Arson | Farmyard |
| Late Oct 1834 | Chiddingstone | Kent | Arson | Wheat stack destroyed |
| Late Oct 1834 | St. Mary's Cray | Kent | Arson | Farmyard |
| Late Oct 1834 | Hoo | Kent | Arson | Had been threatened. Farmyard destroyed |
| Late Oct 1834 | Hoo (vicinity) | Kent | Threatening letters | Several |
| Late Oct 1834 | Woodendean | Sussex | Arson | Straw stack consumed |
| 01.11.1834 | Alfriston | Sussex | Arson | 100 ¼'s oats & barley, 3 wheat stacks |
| 09.11.1834 | Chartham | Kent | Arson | Rick-yard destroyed |
| Early Nov 1834 | Goring | Sussex | Strike/Assemblage | Labourers |
| Early Nov 1834 | Selling | Kent | Threatening letter | Then returned 15% to his tenants |
| 17.11.1834 | Deal | Kent | Arson | Large radish stack |
| Early/Mid Apr | Alfriston | Sussex | Threatening letter | Warning his neighbours |

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|-------------------|----------------------|--------|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1834 | | | | |
| Late Nov 1834 | Cliffe | Kent | Arson | Barn destroyed |
| Late Nov 1834 | Maidstone vicinity | Kent | Threatening letters | Several |
| Late Nov 1834 | Sheldwich | Kent | Arson | Wheat stack |
| Oct-late Nov 1834 | Rotherhithe | Surrey | Arson (5) | Against various tradesmen |
| Late Nov 1834 | Arundel area | Sussex | Strike | Agricultural labourers |
| Late Nov 1834 | Ringmer | Sussex | Assemblage | Peaceful re wages |
| Late Nov 1834 | Felpham & Flansham | Sussex | Strike | Wages |
| Late Nov 1834 | Nr Bognor | Sussex | Threatening letter | Property destruction |
| Early Dec 1834 | Rotherhithe | Surrey | Arson | |
| Early Dec 1834 | Rotherhithe | Surrey | Threatening letters | Several |
| Mid Dec 1834 | New Cross & Deptford | Kent | Threatening letter | Several; to burn his house and him in it |
| Mid Dec 1834 | Hawkhurst | Kent | Arson | Farmyard |
| 25.12.1834 | Saltwood | Kent | Arson | Shop |
| Early Jan 1835 | Herne | Kent | Arson | Hay stack |
| 11.01.1835 | Selling | Kent | Arson | Farmyard |
| Mid Jan 1835 | Higham | Kent | Arson | Farmyard |
| 05.02.1835 | Bromley | Kent | Arson | Barn containing barley stack |
| Mid Feb 1835 | Nr Reigate | Surrey | Animal maiming | Sporting dogs poisoned |
| Mid Feb 1835 | Harrietsham | Kent | Arson | Wheat stack destroyed |
| Late Feb 1835 | Nr Cliffe | Kent | Arson | Several lodges & its contents |
| Mid Mar 1835 | Mongeham | Kent | Arson | Temporary shed destroyed |
| Mid Mar 1835 | Minster (Thanet) | Kent | Arson | Clover stack destroyed |
| Late Mar 1835 | Alfriston | Sussex | Animal maiming | 8 sheep killed, 1 badly injured, 1 stolen |
| April 1835 | Frindsbury | Kent | Animal maiming | 2 waggon horses by pitchfork |
| Early Apr 1835 | Ringmer | Sussex | Malicious damage | Throwing stones through windows |
| Early Apr 1835 | Alfriston | Sussex | Malicious damage & sheep stealing | Seed, 3 sheep & 3 lambs stolen |
| Early Apr 1835 | Alfriston | Sussex | Threats | Chalked upon barn doors |
| Early Apr 1835 | Dover | Kent | Malicious damage | Bottle filled with gunpowder fixed to door exploded & destroyed door |
| Mid Apr 1835 | Pyecombe (Poynings) | Sussex | Malicious damage | Dashed the windows with large stones |
| Mid Apr 1835 | Pagham (Newtimber) | Sussex | Animal maiming & malicious damage | Cow stabbed with hay cutter, rest of stock let out into growing wheat, husbandry tackle destroyed |
| Late Apr 1835 | Hawley | Kent | Machine breaking | Girths & bands rendered useless |
| 26.4.1835 | Jevington | Sussex | Meeting of the United Brothers | 1 st recorded public meeting |

| | | | | |
|----------------|----------------------------|--------|---|---|
| 29.04.1835 | Icklesham | Sussex | Meeting of the United Brothers | Attracted men from Rye and Winchelsea |
| 30.4.1835 | Bapchild | Kent | Anti NPL riot | Over relief 'tickets' |
| Early May 1835 | Canterbury (nr.) | Kent | Sabotage | Stumps marked out for NPL workhouse removed |
| 01.05.1835 | Eastbourne | Sussex | Meeting of the United Brothers | |
| 01.5.1835 | Sittingbourne | Kent | Riot | An attempt to free the prisoners taken at Bapchild |
| 03.05.1835 | Glynde | Sussex | Animal maiming | 2 sheep had crow bars thrust into their heads |
| 04.05.1835 | Doddington | Kent | Anti NPL riot | 400 people |
| 04.05.1835 | Newnham | Kent | Anti NPL riot | Several of the crowd from Doddington |
| 04.05.1835 | Upchurch | Kent | Anti NPL riot | |
| 05.05.1835 | Murston | Kent | Anti-NPL riot | |
| 05.05.1835 | Rodmersham | Kent | Anti-NPL riot | |
| 05.05.1835 | Hernhill | Kent | Anti NPL riot | |
| 05.05.1835 | Lynsted | Kent | Anti NPL riot | |
| 05.05.1835 | Icklesham | Sussex | Shots fired at house | 'Beset' upon by unionists |
| 06.05.1835 | Milton | Kent | Ant-NPL riot | |
| 06.05.1835 | Throwley | Kent | Anti NPL riot | |
| 06.05.1835 | Rye | Sussex | Meeting of the United Brothers | 40 labourers |
| 08.05.1835 | Ospringe | Kent | Anti-NPL riot | |
| 09.05.1835 | Milton | Kent | Animal maiming | Mare stabbed in the neck |
| 09.05.1835 | Willingdon | Sussex | Relieving officer expelled in a cart | |
| 09/05.1835 | Uckfield | Sussex | Anti-NPL riot | Guardians 'assailed' by a mob of 100+ |
| Mid May 1835 | Lewes & Hailsham districts | Sussex | Malicious injury to farming stock & other property: subscription set-up | Several such cases |
| Mid May 1835 | Uckfield | Sussex | Threatening letter on church door | Threatening murder |
| 11.05.1835 | Eastbourne & Langley | Sussex | Meeting of the United Brothers | 400 labs. Initially at Eastbourne then proceeded to Langley |
| 13.05.1835 | Chailey | Sussex | Assemblage | Ascertain how much relief will be granted |
| 13.05.1835 | Seaford (Chinting) | Sussex | Arson | Waggon lodge |
| 16.05.1835 | Rye | Sussex | Meeting of the United Brothers | As advertised by handbills |
| 16.05.1835 | Seaford | Sussex | Arson | Farmyard inc. T. machine |
| 18.05.1835 | Deal | Kent | Disturbance | Inmates object to change in diet |
| 19.05.1835 | Alfriston | Sussex | Meeting of the United Brothers | Resolved members shouldn't work for less |

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| | | | | than 2/- a day |
| 21.05.1835 | Hailsham | Sussex | Meeting of the United Brothers | |
| 22.05.1835 | Pevensey | Sussex | Assemblage | 70 lab, object to get better price for labour |
| 22.05.1835 | Ringmer | Sussex | Assemblage | Anti NPL 'Money or Blood' |
| 24.05.1835 | Chiddingstone | Kent | Assemblage | Labs pulled up stumps marking ground |
| 26.05.1835 | Lewes | Sussex | Complaint to Lewes Branch | From West Firle Union |
| 26.05.1835 | Eastbourne | Sussex | Meeting of the United Brothers | |
| 31.5.1835 | Sutton Valence (2 cases) | Kent | Animal maiming | Hops, apple trees, raspberries, strawberries, peas, beans, etc |
| 21.6.1835 | Boughton Under Blean | Kent | Arson | Farmyard |
| 01.07.1835 | Seaford (Sutton) | Sussex | Arson | Farmyard |
| 02.07.1835 | West Wittering | Sussex | Arson | Farmyard |
| Early July 1835 | Ash | Kent (East) | Animal maiming | 4 ewes, 8 lambs |
| Early July 1835 | Ash | Kent (East) | Plant maiming | 20 perches of unripe canary seed cut down |
| Early July 1835 | Wingham | Kent | Plant maiming | Hop bins & wheat trodden down |
| Early July 1835 | Iping | Sussex | Arson | Paper mill |
| Early July 1835 | Washington | Sussex | Malicious damage | 5 ploughs, a roller & 2 dray carts destroyed with saw |
| Early July 1835 | Storrington | Sussex | Malicious damage | 1 plough, a roller |
| Early July 1835 | West Burton | Sussex | Arson | Farmyard |
| Early July 1835 | Northchapel (nr Petworth) | Sussex | Attack on relieving officer | |
| Early July 1835 | Bodlestreet Green (Herstmonceaux) | Sussex | Meeting of unionists | |
| Mid July 1835 | Didling | Sussex | Arson | |
| Mid July 1835 | Petworth | Sussex | Arson | Small farm burnt to ground |
| Mid July 1835 | Harrietsham | Kent | Animal maiming | 10 horses poisoned – maybe dubious |
| Mid July 1835 | Albourne | Sussex | Arson | Barn & contents destroyed |
| Mid July 1835 | Whitfield | Kent | Sheep stealing (poss. Malicious) | 5 sheep slaughtered, 3 left in field |
| Mid July 1835 | Hurstpierpoint | Sussex | Arson (poss. 2) | Farmyard |
| Late July/Early Aug 1835 | Horsham (area) | Sussex | Opposition to NPL | Threats not to employ Irish – attacks on Irish |
| Early Aug 1835 | Dartford | Kent | Arson | Stable behind tailors shop |
| 07.09.1835 | Sturry | Kent | Arson | 2 wheat stacks |
| Mid Aug 1835 | Dartford | Kent | Arson | Another stable elsewhere |

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|----------------|------------------------------|--------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Mid Aug 1835 | Bromley | Kent | Arson | Farmyard |
| Late Aug 1835 | Harting | Sussex | Arson | Farmyard |
| Early Sep 1835 | Wonersh | Sussex | Arson | Furze field destroyed |
| Early Sep 1835 | Sundridge | Kent | Arson | 15 stacks destroyed |
| Early Sep 1835 | Henfield | Sussex | Arson | Barn |
| 11.09.1835 | Steyning | Sussex | Anti-NPL riot | |
| Mid Sep 1835 | Seaford | Sussex | Arson | Farmyard |
| Mid Sep 1835 | Chichester | Sussex | Arson | Barn destroyed |
| Mid Sep 1835 | Henfield | Sussex | Attempted assassination | Shot missed target |
| 18.09.1835 | Horsham | Sussex | 'Outbreaks' amongst labs | |
| 18.09.1835 | Cuckfield | Sussex | 'Outbreaks' amongst labs | |
| 18.09.1835 | Wisborough Green | Sussex | 'Outbreaks' amongst labs | |
| 21.09.1835 | Ashington/ Washington | Sussex | Arson | Farmyard |
| Late Sep 1835 | Chetsey | Surrey | Anti-NPL riot | From Byfleet & Wisley |
| Late Sep 1835 | Newick | Sussex | Arson | Large wheat stack |
| Late Sep 1835 | Chertsey | Surrey | Assemblage | Anti NPL |
| Late Sep 1835 | Lodsworth | Sussex | Arson | Barn filled with corn destroyed |
| Late Sep 1835 | River | Sussex | Arson | Wheat rick |
| Early Oct 1835 | Preston (Wingham) | Kent | Arson | Farmyard |
| Early Oct 1835 | Cliffe | Kent | Arson | Barn inc. barley |
| Early Oct 1835 | Thursley | Surrey | Arson | Farmyard |
| Mid Oct 1835 | Wingham | Kent | Arson | Farmyard |
| Mid Oct 1835 | Farnham (nr) | Surrey | Arson | Farmyard |
| Mid Oct 1835 | Horsmonden | Kent | Arson (2) | Farmyard |
| Late Oct 1835 | Washington | Sussex | Arson | Barn containing barley & oat |
| Late Oct 1835 | Saltwood | Kent | Arson | Barley stack, bean stack |
| Early Nov 1835 | Chipstead | Surrey | Malicious damage | Flint through window |
| Early Nov 1835 | North Chaple (Fisher Street) | Sussex | Arson | Oat rick in rick yard consumed |
| Late Nov 1835 | Hoo | Kent | Strike | Agric labs |
| Late Nov 1835 | Cuckfield | Sussex | Assemblage | Anti NPL |
| Late Nov 1835 | Appledore | Kent | Arson | Barn |
| Early Dec 1835 | Eastbourne | Sussex | Riot | Workhouse, amongst male paupers |
| Early Dec 1835 | Nettlestead | Kent | Arson | Bean stack |
| Early Dec 1835 | Marden | Kent | Arson | Farmyard |
| Mid Dec 1835 | Dover (Old Park) | Kent | Animal maiming | 8 fowls & 7 fowls: arsenic |
| Mid Dec 1835 | Horsmonden | Kent | Arson | Stubble stack |
| Mid Dec 1835 | Cranbrook | Kent | Malicious damage | 12 large panes of glass broken |
| Mid Dec 1835 | Horsmonden | Kent | Arson | Lodge |
| Mid Dec 1835 | East Dean | Sussex | Arson | Furze |
| Mid Dec 1835 | East Dean | Sussex | Arson | Furze |
| Mid Dec 1835 | Cliffe | Kent | Arson | Farmyard |
| 16.12.1835 | Warnham | Sussex | Anti-NPL Riot | |
| Late Dec 1835 | New Romney | Kent | Arson | Hay stack |

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|------------------------------|--------------------------|--------|---------------------------------|---|
| Late Dec 1835 | Horsham | Sussex | Several petty disturbances | Military now stationed in town: re NPL |
| Early Jan 1836 | Lewes (area) | Sussex | Ducks and geese stolen | Considerable no stolen |
| Early Jan 1836 | Nr Croydon | Surrey | Plant maiming, malicious damage | Young trees, fences |
| Mid Jan 1836 | Herne | Kent | Violent conduct | Blean Union workhouse |
| Late Jan 1836 | Edenbridge (nr) | Kent | Arson | Barn |
| 27/28.01.1836 | Eastbourne | Sussex | Arson | Gorze stack & back part of privy in poorhouse |
| 17.01.1836 | Chiddingstone | Kent | Assemblage | Anti NPL |
| 24.01.1836 | Chiddingstone | Kent | Assemblage | Anti NPL |
| 31.01.1836 | Chiddingstone | Kent | Assemblage | Anti NPL |
| 07.02.1836 | Chiddingstone | Kent | Assemblage | Anti NPL |
| Mid Feb 1836 | Chelsfield | Kent | Arson | Farmyard |
| Mid Feb 1836 | East Sutton | Kent | Arson | Bean stack |
| Mid Feb 1836 | Hailsham & Hurstmonceaux | Sussex | Many thefts | 7 geese |
| 15.02.1836 | Margate | Kent | Arson | 1 of 3 mills |
| Mid Feb 1836 | Hailsham | Sussex | Planned machine breaking | Workhouse |
| Late Feb 1836 | Southfleet | Kent | Arson | Farmyard |
| Late Jan - to early Feb 1836 | Bolney | Sussex | Assault on relieving officer | Of Cuckfield Union |
| Jan/Feb 1836 | Deptford | Kent | Arson | Floor cloth manufactory |
| Early Mar 1836 | Great Bookham | Surrey | Threatening letters (2) | Threat to set Giles ricks on fire |
| Late Mar 1836 | Hellingley | Sussex | Demonstration & much damage | New dietries introduced |
| Late Mar 1836 | Hellingley | Sussex | Demonstration & much damage | New dietries introduced |
| Mid May 1836 | Cliffe | Kent | Arson | Farmyard |
| Late May 1836 | Ewhurst | Sussex | Plant maiming | Hops |
| 09.06.1836 | Brabourne | Kent | Arson | Farmyard |

Appendix 3.3: July 1836 - 1840

July – December 1836

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Parish</i> | <i>County</i> | <i>Incident</i> | <i>Details</i> |
|---------------|----------------------|---------------|-----------------|--|
| Early July | Gravesend | Kent | Animal maiming | Donkey shot by an arrow |
| Mid August | Arundel | Sussex | Plant maiming | Garden produce |
| Mid August | Arundel | Sussex | Animal maiming | 2 cows tails tied |
| Late August | Fishbourne | Sussex | Arson | 1 wheat rick |
| 29 August | Chevington-Sundridge | Kent | Arson | Stack of clover |
| Mid September | Stoke | Surrey | Arson | Barn |
| 19 October | Frant | Sussex | Arson | Barn filled with hay & corn |
| 5 November | Iden (nr Rye) | Sussex | Arson | Hay stacks |
| 7 November | Sevenoaks | Kent | Arson | Farmyard |
| Mid November | Tunbridge Wells | Kent | Arson | Fire in a few places on the common |
| Mid November | Egham (nr) | Surrey | Arson | Rick of barley |
| Mid November | Sittingbourne (nr) | Kent | Animal maiming | 9 pigs poisoned |
| 12 November | Maidstone | Kent | Arson | Their own house |
| Late November | Speldhurst | Kent | Arson | Barn & lodge (4 th recent case in area) |
| Late December | Erith | Kent | Arson | Barn destroyed |
| Late December | Woolwich | Kent | Arson | Barn & Inn |
| 25 December | Ashford (nr) | Kent | Arson | Barn filled with bark |

1837

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Parish</i> | <i>County</i> | <i>Incident</i> | <i>Details</i> |
|-------------------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Mid January | Gravesend | Kent | Malicious damage + plant maiming | Fence, young trees |
| 2 February | West Firle | Sussex | Malicious damage | Beams of several ploughs sawed |
| 24 February | Dover | Kent | Malicious damage | Panes of glass broken in bed chamber |
| 10 March | Seal | Kent | Arson | Barn & outbuildings |
| Mid April | Charlton | Kent | Plant maiming | Quick set hedges pulled up and rooted |
| Late May | Arundel | Sussex | Arson | Extensive corn stores |
| Late August | Maidstone | Kent | Malicious damage | Lynch pins removed from 2 vans – political motive |
| Late August – early September | Margate | Kent | Animal maiming | Horse throat cut |
| Mid September | Burwash | Sussex | Plant maiming | 20 hop bines |
| Mid September | Chalk | Kent | Arson | Bakers premises |
| Late September | Chalk | Kent | Arson | Farmyard |
| Late September | Chalk | Kent | Arson | Wheat stacks |
| Early October | Bromley | Kent | Arson | 5 stacks |
| 3 October | Hurst Green | Sussex | Arson | Machinery manufactory |
| 17 October | Hurst Green | Sussex | Arson | Machinery manufactory |
| 24 October | Halstead | Kent | Arson | Barn |
| 12 November | East Sutton | Kent | Animal maiming | Buck shot at |
| 12 November | Maidstone | Kent | Arson | House |
| 18 November | Shere | Surrey | Arson | Wheat rick |
| 4 December | Halstead | Kent | Arson | Farmyard |
| 15 December | Littlehampton | Sussex | Animal maiming | 2 cows tails tied |

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Parish</i> | <i>County</i> | <i>Incident</i> | <i>Details</i> |
|---------------|-----------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| 9 January | Warlingham | Surrey | Arson | Windmill |
| 28 January | Udimore | Sussex | Arson | Farm yard |
| 6 February | Hadlow | Kent | Arson | Farm yard |
| Mid February | Icklesham | Sussex | Attempted assassination | Rev. T Richards + friends |
| Mid February | Eastbourne | Sussex | Arson | Hay stack |
| 15 February | Chobham | Surrey | Animal maiming | 1 Sheep |
| Early March | Hoo | Kent | Arson | Farmyard |
| Mid March | Bagshot | Surrey | Arson | Farmyard |
| Mid March | Wimbledon | Surrey | Arson | 150 acres furze |
| Mid March | Wilmington | Sussex | Arson | Stack of wheat |
| Mid March | Wimbledon | Surrey | Arson | Common (again) |
| Mid March | Lambeth (Clapham) | Surrey | Arson | Furze |
| Early April | Wye | Kent | Arson | Sainfoin stack |
| Early April | Alfriston | Sussex | Radical anti-NPL meeting | Chaired by Brooker. Raised 3 rd petition |
| 25 April | Icklesham | Sussex | Attempted assassination | Rev. Richards again. Was sitting in his parlour |
| 30 April | Halling | Kent | Arson | Barn |
| Early May | Rotherhithe | Surrey | Arson | Pile of oak timber |
| 15 May | Ticehurst | Sussex | Malicious damage | Turnpike gates |
| Late May | Rochester | Kent | Arson | Boys set fire to shavings in the cellar of an empty house |
| 31 May | Epsom | Surrey | Arson | Farm yard |
| Early July | Brighton | Sussex | Combination | Postboys |
| Mid July | Wodchurch | Kent | Riot | Over an attempted eviction from common |
| 12 September | Fordwich | Kent | Arson | Barn containing a threshing machine |
| Early October | Hadlow | Kent | Riot | Gypsies and labs over hop-picking |
| Early October | Farleigh | Kent | Riot | Irish hop-pickers |
| 4 October | Brede | Sussex | Arson | Oat stack |
| 22 October | Wye | Kent | Arson | Clover + wheat stack |
| Late October | Ospringe | Kent | Animal maiming | Sheep let into clover field. 10 died. |
| Late October | Eastbourne (Southbourne) | Sussex | Arson | Wheat rick |
| 5 November | Arundel | Sussex | Malicious damage | New gas pipes broken off bridge |
| Mid November | Hailsham (Sayerland) | Sussex | Arson | Barn + lodge |
| Mid November | East Grinstead (Brambletye) | Sussex | Arson | Farm yard |
| 27 December | Warnham | Sussex | Malicious damage + animal maiming | Chickens killed. Fences and gate destroyed |

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Parish</i> | <i>County</i> | <i>Incident</i> | <i>Details</i> |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|--|
| 14 January | Chobham | Surrey | Arson | Barley rick |
| 16 January | Chobham | Surrey | Arson | Farm yard |
| 17 January | Merton | Surrey | Arson | Crown Inn |
| 19 January | Guildford (Blackheath) | Surrey | Arson | Waggon loaded with furze faggots |
| Late January | Slinfold | Sussex | Animal maiming | 3 colts |
| 2 February | Rudgwick | Sussex | Animal maiming | Mare and colt |
| 2 February | Slinfold | Sussex | Animal maiming | 3 cows |
| Mid March | Haslemere | Surrey | Animal maiming | 20 sheep after cottagers ejected from waste |
| Mid March | Godalming | Surrey | Attempted assasination | Mr. Baker of Frensham Hall. Re same ejectement |
| Early April | Windlesham | Surrey | Arson | Cart. Engine destroyed |
| Early May | Iden | Sussex | Plant maiming | Underwood |
| Mid May | Bagshot + Windlesham | Surrey | Arson (several) | Heath |
| Late May | Reigate (Redhill) | Surrey | Riot | Rail workers + police |
| Early July | Dover | Kent | Malicious damage | Tent frame |
| Early July | Ramsgate | Kent | Riot | 1,000 people due to convictions of fish hawkers |
| Early August | Chichester | Sussex | Arson | Egremont Arms pub |
| 27 August | Rye | Sussex | Plant maiming | Vegetables, herbs, fruit, + flowers |
| Early September | Ospringe | Kent | Plant maiming | Hop vines cut twice recently |
| 6 September | Westerham | Kent | Arson | Hay barn |
| 7 September | Eastry | Kent | Arson | Farm yard |
| Mid September | Otford | Kent | Arson | Farm yard |
| Late September | Barming | Kent | Strike | Hop pickers |
| Late September | West Dean | Sussex | Animal maiming | Ducks |
| Early October | Shoreham | Kent | Arson | Farm yard + cottage |
| Early October | Kingston- upon-Thames | Surrey | Arson | Wheat rick |
| Early October | West Dean | Sussex | Arson | Barn containing threshing machine |
| Mid October | Chartham (Shalmsford Street) | Kent | Animal maiming | 1 sheep. Several recently stolen |
| Mid October | Pluckley | Kent | Arson | Barn |
| Mid October | Faversham | Kent | Strike | Journeymen shoemakers |
| Mid October | South Bersted (Aldwick) | Sussex | Arson | Farm yard |
| Late October | Croydon | Surrey | Animal maiming | Heifer |
| Late October | Streatham | Surrey | Animal maiming | Cow |
| 24 October | North Bersted | Sussex | Arson | Barley stack |
| Early November | Tunbridge Wells | Kent | Arson | Farm yard |
| 23 November | Lindfield/ Ardingly | Sussex | Arson | Barn + outbuildings |
| Mid December | Rye | Sussex | Malicious damage | 3 saws |
| 15 December | Speldhurst (Langton) | Kent | Arson | Hay barn |
| 25 November | Woolwich | Kent | Arson | Tobacconist's warehouse |

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Parish</i> | <i>County</i> | <i>Incident</i> | <i>Details</i> |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|---|
| 1-3 January | Lambeth (Brixton) | Surrey | Animal maiming | Horse |
| Mid January | Cobham + Bagshot | Surrey | Plant maiming | Hedges + shrubs |
| 24 January | Higham | Kent | Arson | Farm yard |
| 25 January | Betchworth | Surrey | Malicious damage | Fences destroyed |
| Early February | Farnham (nr.) | Surrey | Arson | Cow sheds |
| Early February | Augmering | Sussex | Animal maiming | 9 yearling rams |
| 8 February | Farnham | Surrey | Arson | Barn |
| Early-mid Feb | Dover | Kent | Malicious damage | Doors, gates, + lamps damaged |
| Late February | Alciston | Sussex | Arson | Farm yard |
| 25 February | Speldhurst (Langton) | Kent | Arson (2) | Barn, then an hour later a hay stack ¼ of a mile away |
| 8 March | Heathfield | Sussex | Animal maiming | Mare |
| Late March | Speldhurst (Rusthall) | Kent | Arson (2) | Barn, then another at a distance set on fire |
| Late April-early May | Frimley + Wndlesham (Bagshot) | Surrey | Arson (at least 15 cases) | Plantations on the waste |
| 3 May | Funtingdon | Sussex | Arson | Farm yard |
| Late May | Great Chart | Kent | Plant maiming | 20 young oak trees |
| 31 May | Chobham | Surrey | Arson | Furze on common |
| 12 June | Billingshurst | Sussex | Malicious damage | Watermill flashes |
| Mid June | Yalding | Kent | Animal maiming | 4 horses tails cut |
| 15 June | Barming | Kent | Animal maiming | 3 horses tails cut |
| Mid July | Boxley (nr.) | Kent | Attack | Carriage damaged + passengers 'much insulted' |
| Mid July | Sandwich | Kent | Arson | Rope-maker's Pitch House |
| 20 July | Firle | Sussex | Malicious damage + plant maiming | Oxen let into standing oats. Crops mown |
| Early August | Icklesham | Sussex | Malicious damage | Ploughs, harrows, shims, cart rods etc |
| 10 August | Maidstone (nr.) | Kent | Plant maiming | 50 hills of hops and several fruit trees cut |
| Early October | Herne | Kent | Arson | Farm yard + cottage |
| Early October | Sheerness | Kent | Attempt to destroy dockyard | No detail |
| 2 October | Sheerness | Kent | Arson | Camperdown boat |
| 9 October | Sheerness (Blue Town) | Kent | Arson | Empty house |
| Mid October | Kingston-upon-Thames | Surrey | Arson | Farm yard |
| Late October | Ash-next-Gravesend | Kent | Arson | Barns + outbuildings |
| Mid December | Buckland | Kent | Demonstration | Effigy of an 'odious' parish officer burnt |
| Late December | Wanborough | Surrey | Animal maiming | Tails + manes cut from horses of several farmers |
| 31 December | Buxted | Sussex | Animal maiming | Tongue cut from a horse |